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OXFORD SERMONS.



OXFORD SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY.

BY THE

REV. EDWIN A. ABBOTT, D.D.

FORMERLY FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY.

IF the object of Revelation is to reveal God to men, and if God is revealed to men mainly by the experiences of a heaven-guided life, then it would seem that Revelation is intended to teach us how to live. But if Revelation is to teach us how to live, and if life changes and grows from century to century, then it would seem that Revelation must grow also, that the proportion between the two may be maintained. Such a view of Revelation is persistently enforced throughout the whole of the Bible. Old and New Testament alike assert that religion is to be a progress, not a standing-still. The Law and the Prophets point to a Redeemer; the Redeemer promises us a Spirit which *shall guide us into all truth.*

But in every Church and in every age the Party of Growth has to contend with two other parties, the Party of Destruction, who would destroy everything, and the Conservative Party, who would preserve everything as it is; and these two Parties will always make themselves more easily intelligible than the first—the Party of Progressive Truth. To retain everything exactly as it is, or to destroy everything root and branch—either of these has the merit of being a plain policy, appreciable by the laziest of minds in the laziest of humours; and this in itself is no small commendation in a busy age which finds desultory reading far more attractive than thought or study. The policy of the Party of Growth, necessarily involving partial destruction and partial conservation, obliges them to give reasons for destroying some things and preserving others, and to justify their discrimination. But to discriminate, how tedious! And to justify discrimination, how dull for the reader of the justification! Not half so amusing, after dinner, as a slashing demonstration in some magazine (which everybody will read and talk about) that *everything is naught*, nor half so intelligible as next month's rejoinder, set off with epigrams, that *whatever is, is good!*

Who is puerile enough to complain of this state

of things, or to lament that growth is slow and unsensational? One might as well complain that the quiet processes of Nature are less amusing than the transformation scenes of a pantomime. Besides, those who are disposed to feel a little irritated at the nonsense that is published and tolerated by extreme parties, and a little disheartened by the slow progress of intelligent religion, may take courage from the thought that the present neglect of truth is as natural and inevitable as its ultimate triumph. The times just now are against us. Besides depression in the material prosperity of the nation, wars and politics—war in its most degrading aspect, and politics in their lowest and basest signification—distract our minds from progress of every kind, religious as well as social. If it is a mark of “barbarous times” to have at the head of affairs a government degrading to the national morality, and if it is a “calamity” and “disaster” that the nation should be dragged into unjust wars and impracticable engagements by a policy from which the educated conscience of the country recoils with disgust, then we may easily account for a temporary outbreak of superstition among us. For superstition, says Bacon, is caused by calamity no less than by ritualism : *The causes of superstition are pleasing and sensual rites and*

ceremonies and lastly, barbarous times, especially joined with calamities and disasters.

Some of these causes at least are readily removable; and when they are removed we may hope for better things. But even when progress comes, let us pray that it may come naturally and therefore slowly. If we are certain that we have found the truth, and if we are confident that the truth must ultimately prevail, we can afford to innovate by degrees, *following the example of time itself; which indeed innovateth greatly, but quietly, and by degrees scarce to be perceived.* As we commend this sentence to the attention of the Destructive Party, so we may offer for the consideration of the Conservative Party another sentence by the same author: *Surely every medicine is an innovation, and he that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils. For time is the greatest innovator; and if time, of course, alters things to the worse, and wisdom and counsel shall not alter them to the better, what shall be the end?*

The following sermons—of which six were preached before the University of Oxford, from 1877 to 1879, and the seventh in the Chapel of Balliol College in 1878—are intended as a contribution to the views of that Middle Party described above, that Party which desires neither to destroy

everything nor to retain everything, but to imitate Time, or rather Nature, *the greatest innovator*, and to reform things *greatly but quietly, and by degrees scarce to be perceived*.

The characteristic which especially distinguishes the Party of Progressive Truth from the Conservative Party in religion is, that the latter desires to be under an unchangeable Law, while the former claims the Liberty of development. Both desire to be in Christ. But the latter, interpreting literally the precept to *stand fast in the Lord*, imagines that *standing fast* implies *standing still*; while the former adds to this command that other which bids us *stand fast in the liberty wherewith ye are called*. For the Party of Progress believes that the Word of God is not Himself *standing still*, but even now yearly and daily revealing to us some new truth about Himself that we *may grow up into Him in all things*. If some single epithet is needed to describe this species of Christian thought, and to distinguish the Party of Growth from the Conservatives and Destructives, there seems no reason why we should disown the epithet which most naturally expresses that *liberty* upon which St. Paul insisted most strongly as the precious privilege of those who were under Christ and not under the Law. *Liberalism* in religion as

well as in politics may be at times too destructive or too conservative ; but in our English associations with the word there is nothing that should prevent a Christian who believes in the progress of Christianity from adopting, as a distinguishing title, the name of Christian Liberal. Possibly the characteristics of Liberal Christianity may derive some light from being briefly contrasted with those of the two extreme Parties, the Destructives, and the Conservatives.¹

¹ The framework of the Three Parties has been adopted for convenience because it gives opportunities for illustration by contrast as well as by exposition. But the author is far from asserting that the Liberal Party here described is conterminous with any one of the three recognized Parties in the English Church. Strictly speaking, we ought to substitute for "Liberal Party" some such expression as "Liberal Tendency," meaning thereby that species of religious thought which claims and allows a liberty to vary the shape and expression of worship, provided that the worship itself is righteous, and the expression natural. Such a tendency, it is to be hoped, is not entirely unrepresented in any of the three Church Parties.

But then it may be urged, "If this is your meaning, why use the word *Party*? Why not rather speak of *the policy that would be advocated by those who believe in the growth of religious truth*, or some other periphrasis?" The answer is, "because it is a periphrasis." For a similar reason the term *Liberal Tendency* is inadmissible, because we cannot say "the Liberal Tendency believes this or that," but must needs say, "the Liberal Tendency would lead us to believe this or that:" which is not only long, but also, in a complicated sentence, conducive to obscurity. If indeed there were the slightest danger of being

I. First for the Destructive Party.

1. These thinkers would destroy God as an influence on mankind, asserting that He is unknowable: by which they mean that they have never succeeded, and see no chance of succeeding, in detecting Him by analysis in the laboratory, or exhibiting Him beneath a microscope. They ignore love, trust, and awe, the very faculties by which the Supreme appears to us to have intended

misunderstood, any periphrasis would be preferable to a delusive brevity: but with this explanation, none need misunderstand.

A second objection may be urged, that "when people speak now, in the superficial way that is allowable as such, of the *Liberal Party* in religion, they mean to include all who, not being of the High Church or Evangelical Party or strictly orthodox, are also not Atheists." But if this be so, the phrase is clearly misused to denote what might be much better expressed by a single word—Theists, leaving the phrase *Liberal Party* free for a happier application.

"But in a religious discussion, the introduction of the phraseology of political parties is open to much objection, and likely to mislead. Are there not many of all political parties, who may belong to the Liberal Party in religion?" Undoubtedly there are: and for that reason it has not been thought necessary in the text to disclaim the identification of the Liberal Party in politics with the Liberal Party in religion. But to prevent any possible misunderstanding, let the disclaimer be made here: *the Liberal Party in Religion is not conterminous with the Liberal Party in Politics*. And if any of my readers has no objection to newfangled expressions, he may take his pen and substitute for "Conservative" "Retentive," and for "Liberal Party" "Party of Growth"—the expressions originally used by the author but erased for their objectionable novelty.

His children to feel His presence; and then, after refusing to seek Him with the faculties that might have revealed Him, and after going through the form of seeking Him with the faculties that could not possibly have revealed Him, they pronounce Him non-existent. Their argument is this: "There is no God, for we cannot perceive Him by touch, taste, smell, or sight. *Credite non expertis.*" As if two or three confident persons should come into an assembly of ordinary human beings endowed with the normal faculty of vision, and resolutely shutting their eyes, should asseverate, "There is no moon up yonder; for we can neither smell nor hear, nor taste, nor touch it!"

There can be no argument here, for there is not a strip of common ground upon which to meet and do battle. Believers in a God will do wisely to waste no more time in discussing the existence of a God than they would waste in discussing wedded love or filial reverence. Atheism may be safely left to be gradually destroyed by the irresistible arguments which Nature, that is, the Word of God, is continually applying to us: the experience of life, the birth and training of children, the requirements of the individual soul and the necessities of national growth.

But, though argument is out of place, it is

important to disentangle, once for all, the pretensions of the Destructive Party from the claims of scientific truth. For, in the attempt to dispense with a God, some think they find assistance from the discovery of new links in the chain that unites effects with the First Cause; not seeing that protoplasm, potential atoms, and any other secondary causes that may hereafter be discovered, no more enable us to dispense with a God than do the æons of the ancient Gnostics. The more links we detect in the chain of creation, the more, and not the less, wonderful becomes the chain, and consequently the Creator of the chain. If Protoplasm, subject to certain laws, is the maker of all things, how marvellous is Protoplasm! But how much more than marvellous is the Cause of Protoplasm, the Maker of the maker of the world!

2. The Destructive Party destroys religion because it has contained illusions; not perceiving that without illusions Nature leads mankind to no truths.

3. The Destructive Party destroys the Old Testament because it contains accounts of miracles; not perceiving that the removal of the miraculous element from the ancient history of Israel still leaves the record of a long series of national events which have moulded that famous

people to be the spiritual teachers of the world—a record in which the believer in a God discerns (none the less clearly for the absence of miracles) the over-ruling Providence that *shapes the ends* of nations. Give us the power of stopping the sun at will, of turning sea into dry land, and of calling forth bread from the skies and water from the rock—and we too, even we poor mortals, will undertake to shape a nation that shall not forget our Law, and that shall transmit to a remote posterity a reverence for the delivering Hand! To create a people of priests and prophets is a comparatively easy task with unlimited miraculous machinery; but to shape it in the course of nature is surely a far more marvellous accomplishment.

In the same lazy spirit the Destructive Party rejects the whole of the New Testament, not only for its miracles, but also because it records a Life and Character pre-eminently grand and powerful; which they—being unwilling to accept it because they have never met with, or found in the history of other nations, a character of precisely equal power—resolve to call, not a Man, but a Myth. And thus, pusillanimously abhorrent of facts, and resolutely blind to the laws of human nature, the countrymen of Bacon and Shakespeare are content to take their theology on trust from the Germans,

and to leave unexplained the greatest Revolution that has taken place in the history of mankind.

4. The Destructive Party, from *a priori* grounds, rejects every narrative of miracle, modern or ancient, without attempting to discriminate between (a) what is false and written with purposes of falsehood; (b) what is false, but developed from truth and collected round truth by accretion; (c) what is false, but originated by misunderstanding of metaphor; (d) what is true, but not miraculous except in appearance; that is to say, exceptional but not unnatural.

II. Next for the Conservative Party.

1. These, admitting no growth in our knowledge of God, deny that we can learn anything new about Him from His newly-discovered works, that is, from poetry, history, and science. To them, these forms of truth, instead of seeming to be Servants of Religion, appear to be her antagonists; or, at least, not friends, but altogether out of her circle. Thus the world goes on, but their Religion stands still; and, the natural order of things being reversed, the Church, instead of welcoming scientific discovery, retards it, and accepts no new revelation of the Word of God that is not forced upon her by inexorable facts. The World becomes the light of the Church.

2. Admitting no growth in the knowledge of right and wrong, they disclaim the highest privilege of a national church, that of raising the national morality. If they desire to educate the people at all, it is mainly in the matter of stoles and chasubles and eastward positions. Even the internal policy of the nation does not concern them, except so far as it concerns "Church interests," that is to say, the adjournment of Disestablishment and the preservation of the wealth and social position of the clergy. As for the external policy of England, it is wholly outside their province. Not from the clergy in past generations proceeded the attempt to wipe off from England's honour the disgrace of tolerating slavery; not from many of the clergy in this generation proceeds any utterance of protest against injustice to the Zulu and the Afghan. The Herodians and Sadducees of England, speaking through the *Pall Mall Gazette*, declare that "it is hypocrisy to ignore the law of conflict which is at present the law of the relations between all nations, or to pretend that our policy is one whit less subject to it than that of our neighbours. . . . Surely we might be candid enough to admit that our motives, though perfectly legitimate, were perfectly selfish:" and the voice of the Church of Christ, speaking through

an archdeacon of the Church of England, reproves the leading journal of religious thought for protesting against this "perfectly selfish" policy, on the ground that, "selfish" though it is, it does not affect the Church: "Why insert violent articles on *State policy which in no way affects Church policy?*" Then in the name of Him who scorned the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, in comparison with *judgment and mercy*—what is "Church policy?" Is it not the "policy" of the Church to elevate and purify the policy of the State? Or else, what is the significance and purpose of a State Church? Is her ministry upon the State to consist in being "established" after the manner of that apostle who *had the bag and bare what was put therein?* Alas, how does the same human nature reproduce itself under the most various masks! Caiaphas the Sadducee protesting that scruples about the death of *one man* should not be allowed to stand in the way of the interests of the *whole nation*, and an *expedient* policy; the Pharisees declaring that the obligation to support a starving father *in no way affects* the right of the Church to take the gifts of the unnatural son; Demetrius the silversmith and his Ephesian fellow-tradesmen shouting for their pockets and for Diana of Ephesus; and, lastly, this venerable archdeacon of the Church of England

rebuking the *Guardian* for "violent articles on *State policy which in no way affects Church policy*"—are they not all a band of brothers?

3. Admitting no progress in religious truth, the Conservative Party cannot believe that the truth of Christ was, like all other truth, conveyed to the disciples from the very first through illusions. That in the fourth, or fifth, or eleventh, or sixteenth centuries corruptions crept into the Church and obscured the truth, is readily admitted by them; but that the first century, and even the first generation of Christians was not without its illusions—this is to them incredible. But for the express statement of all the Gospels, they would not admit that the apostles ever misunderstood Christ. Rather than believe that John the Baptist had at one time his doubts about the wisdom of the course adopted by Jesus, or that St. Peter was for a time not quite settled in his notions about the relations between Jews and Gentiles in the Church, they would prefer to believe that the Baptist sent his disciples to ask a question that had no meaning, and that St. Peter had made a private arrangement with St. Paul, allowing the latter to rebuke him publicly and groundlessly with the view of thereby bestowing upon the deluded church of Antioch some unknown and inconceivable advantage. The

undoubted fact that, long after the death of Jesus, some of the Apostles expected the Coming of the Lord within a few years, fills them with such terror that no force of evidence will induce them to accept it.

4. Admitting no progress, the Conservative Party will not admit that we are growing in our knowledge of the Scriptures by the discovery of errors and interpolations in the books of the Old and New Testaments.

If the chronology, or astronomy, or geology of the Bible is shown by honest unbiased students of these several subjects to be erroneous, they waste a generation or two in attempting to show that the students are wrong. A century afterwards, when time has forced upon them the conviction (which the outside world has had for a hundred years) that they themselves are wrong, and not the students, they waste another century in attempting to show that, though the students may be right, yet the Bible never meant what it was supposed to mean, but something else which every one but a Conservative knows it could not possibly have meant. The constant duty of defending and apologising for the Good News of Christ creates in their minds a chaos of theological hopes and fears, which naturally gives

birth to all manner of monstrosities of criticism. No soundness of scholarship, no integrity in the ordinary relations of life, is proof against the tremendous temptation to show that the Book which they regard as the one Guide of their lives is free from all error, and even from all interpolation: and hence it has come to pass that, even in this generation, a blameless and respected Professor in our most ancient University has actually ventured to defend the genuineness of one of the spurious appendices of the Gospel of St. Mark!

But such intellectual derelictions ought to be indulgently regarded. Who has not experienced the distorting influence of combined terror and ignorance?

*Or in the dark, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!*

The existence of various readings, interpolations, and books of doubtful genuineness in the Old and New Testaments, instead of suggesting to the Conservatives thankfulness, because we are thereby delivered from the danger of idolatry to a Book, fills their camp with night-alarms, and instigates them perpetually to wild and useless acts of self-defence against imaginary foes. But every-

thing must be pardoned to those who live in the sincere fear that their Christianity may be exploded to-morrow by the application to the Greek Testament of the same rules of criticism which we should apply to Thucydides or Æschylus.

5. Again, admitting no progress, the Conservative Party cannot admit that the experience of eighteen centuries, increasing our knowledge of physiology and of history—and more especially of the history of religions—has enabled us to interpret more truly than was possible in former times the miraculous narratives in the Scriptures. With the majority of this Party, therefore, all miracles stand on one footing of authority, and are all equally certain. Here, it is true, the party is divided. Not all can go to the length of regarding as equally historical the narrative of the stopping of the sun and that of the instantaneous cure of the paralytic. Yet the instinct of the Party guides most of them, in strict accordance with the Conservative principle, to retain all as historical, arguing somewhat after this manner: "If we once begin to give up miracles, there will be no end of it. If one miracle may have sprung from metaphor misunderstood, or from accretion, or the like, so may another. Once set foot on the slope of

Rationalism and we shall find no stopping-place. We will therefore remain as we are."

So they remain. But each year sees their footing grow more perilous. Every new discovery of science tends to undermine the ledge on which they are tremulously standing. And well may they tremble. For if Christianity is based upon miracles, and miracle after miracle melts away beneath the rays of scientific and critical discovery, there is clearly but one fate possible for the superstructure. Meanwhile they *remain as they are*, awaiting the inevitable, neither able to move themselves nor to help others upward. The whole character of Christianity is corrupted by their fears, and from being a religion of liberty it sinks to a superstition only fit for slaves. We look for the good news of Christ and they give us apologies, and when we ask for the doctrine of the kingdom of God they put into our hands *Paley's Evidences* and the *Horæ Paulinæ*.

Beneath all these errors of the Conservative Party there lies one fundamental error; that of ignoring Nature as a mirror of the Word of God, and of refusing to take the Book of the Universe as a commentary upon the written Scriptures. Hence Nature becomes to them unmeaning, unprogressive, and unholy; and Christ, the Word of God,

becomes unnatural. Hence the Son of man is dissociated from the Son of God ; and what Christ has joined together in Himself, they put asunder.

III. We pass to the consideration of the middle or Liberal Party.

1. The Liberal Party, believing that God made the Bible and the Universe to illustrate each other, and to lead to the higher worship of Himself, believes that each fresh truth elicited for men in poetry, history, and science, comes from Him and points to Him ; and that as the world grows in the knowledge of Nature so ought it to grow in the knowledge of God. Hence it is not a boast or a dream, but a simple duty that this generation should, at least in some respects, surpass the first and all other previous generations of the Christian Church in the knowledge of spiritual things ; and in like manner on the generations yet to come rests the same responsibility to surpass us in the knowledge of the Supreme. Thus the life of man teems with the highest hopes : and the Church will ever instigate her children to the discovery of new truths in every department of knowledge, that on these we may rise to that highest Knowledge of all which we have been taught by the Master to call Eternal Life.

2. The Liberal Party, believing that religious

as well as scientific truth is progressive, and recognising that in religion as in astronomy, and in churches as in individuals, Nature has always been wont to teach through the medium of partial error—sees neither cause for fear (as the Conservatives do) nor for mockery (as the Destructives do) in the fact that, from the earliest times, the Christian Church has never been free from illusions; which, after serving the purpose of protecting immature truths, are destined to be ultimately cast off like husks or shells by the growth of the fruit within.

3. Applying this belief to the Scriptures, the Liberal Party assumes, as almost a matter of course, that in the text of the Old and New Testaments there will be found some errors which it is the duty of successive generations to discover and remove. The removal of errors and excrescences from the Bible cannot affect their faith in that Life and Character which could still less have arisen from errors than from inventions; a Life to which testimony is borne not by isolated texts, but by the New Testament as a whole and by the whole life of the Christian Church. When the astronomers, by their disputations about the spots of the sun, shall succeed in wiping out the sun itself from the heaven, then, and not till then,

will the Liberal Party apprehend any danger that textual criticism of the Gospels may efface Jesus of Nazareth from the history of mankind.

4. Concerning miracles, the Liberal Party is alone unbiased and alone competent to pass a fair judgment. The Destructives hate miracles as an interference with their high *a priori* notions of what the government of the world ought to be: the Conservatives cling in desperation to miracles as an indispensable basis for their faith; neither party, therefore, can judge them dispassionately. But the Liberal Party, having on the one hand no *a priori* prejudice against miracles nor against facts of any kind, and on the other hand feeling no need of miracles to sustain their faith and justify their worship of Christ (whom they adore not as a wonder-worker but as the Healer of the souls of men) is able to discuss the miraculous element in the Scriptures as an interesting but by no means vital question, with a dispassionateness scarcely possible to either of the two extreme parties, and very conducive to the attainment of correct results.

This last consideration brings out with perfect clearness the radical difference between Liberal and Conservative Christians. It turns on the

meaning of worship; which the latter neither analyse, nor regard as capable of analysis, but define as the right attitude of man to God. If therefore you ask them why you are to worship Christ, their answer is, "Because He is God"; and to the question, "How do you know that He is God?" they reply, "From certain texts of Scripture," or else, "From His miraculous works and fulfilments of prophecy." Thus their path to the worship of Christ lies through a kind of syllogism, thus: "Worship is the feeling due to God. The Scriptures prove Christ to be God. Therefore the Scriptures prove that Christ is to be worshipped."

But the path traced out by the Liberal School to lead them to the worship of Christ is altogether different: "We see in righteous worship three elements—love, trust, and reverence. For the development of these feelings Nature, that is, the Word of God, seems to have been moulding mankind from the beginning, inculcating reverence through the teaching of non-human nature, and love and trust through the training of the family and society. Christ, taking up the previous work of the divine Word, has not only developed these feelings in us still further, but has also attached

them to Himself as their object. Hence we worship Him ; not led by the demonstration of a syllogism but because we feel more trust and love and reverence for Him than for any other, and because we cannot think of the Father unless our thoughts pass upward through the thought of the Son. For us He sits at the right hand of God, not merely because St. Stephen saw Him there eighteen hundred years ago, but because our spirits place Him, and cannot but place Him, by the side of the Majesty on high. To Him and through Him we offer up our petitions, not because of the Protomartyr's precedent, but because, when we lift the wishes of our hearts to heaven, He is our Treasure there; and *where our treasure is, there must our hearts be also.*"

Surely this, the natural worship of Jesus, is the purest and highest as well as the safest—to worship Him because one's instincts dictate it! Were a father to ask his children why they loved him, which answer would please him best,—“Because I cannot help it,” or, “Because of the fifth commandment?” And can we doubt which answer from us, who have been taught to call ourselves the children of God, would be most acceptable to the Father in heaven and to the Eternal Son,

if we were asked to give our reasons for worshipping Jesus of Nazareth—"Because we cannot help it," or, "Because of thirteen texts of Scripture which we interpret rightly, though the Unitarians say we are wrong?"

CHAPTER II.

TRANSITIONAL TEACHING.

THUS much having been stated about the two extreme sections of religious thought, and the position occupied between the two by the Liberal School, it may be useful to add a few words about the best means of diffusing new truth in a time of religious transition. As to which, there appear to be three rules—first, to construct before destroying ; second, to distinguish between ascertained truth and unascertained ; third, to distinguish between teaching and discussing.

1. The precept to construct before destroying will be distasteful to many Liberals ; and it is without doubt inconvenient for the purposes of immediate success. If you attempt to obey it, it will expose you to attacks from all sides. In the first place your constructive efforts are sure to be faulty, and likely to be crude and immature. Most novelties are. We have high authority for

believing that *as the births of living creatures are at first ill-shapen, so are all innovations which are the births of Time.* Consequently, your friends will tell you that it is better to omit positive and constructive theories : “ Be as negative as you like ; but to put forward a new constructive theory will expose you to all sorts of attacks and thus discredit your negative theory.” This sounds like very sensible advice. You may be prepared to turn a deaf ear to the Conservatives who rebuke your rashness for obtruding wild speculations that clash with established truths ; or to the Destructives who accuse you of half-heartedness and suppression of the truth ; or to both parties when they condemn your construction as a great deal more improbable than any other theory that has ever claimed attention ; but it is not so light a matter to disregard the advice of sober seekers after truth, who say, “ At best you can but make your theory probable ; at the worst you may neutralise what would otherwise be a real success in clearing error out of the way.”

Nevertheless the precept ought certainly to be obeyed ; or at all events disobedience ought to be the exception, not the rule. Nature, in her ordinary processes, does not pierce the integument of the fruit from without, but casts it off by

expansive growth from within. Noxious insects may adopt the former course, but the Christian who follows as his guide the quiet course of Nature, will adopt the latter. It is better to remain for many years altogether silent about such errors as have been for centuries the integuments of truth than to begin tearing away the protecting covering before one clearly discerns through the interstices the ripened fruit. All widely prevalent illusions contain some truth, and to reveal the inclosed truth is generally the best way to dissipate the inclosing illusion. We ought not to desire to wrest from poor shivering souls the encumbering garments wherewith they have sought to protect themselves from the deadly chill of atheism, but rather to make them feel the all-pervading warmth of the natural worship of the Eternal Word, the Sun of righteousness, which will render such encumbrances superfluous. Vain will be the most cogent criticism if applied to the mere purpose of destruction. Men must have some kind of worship; and until you supply them with a religion, it is useless to attempt to take from them their superstitions.

The first and principal business therefore should be, not to attack such beliefs as those in a material heaven and a material hell; nor the perverted

shapes assumed by the several doctrines of justification by faith, of the atonement, of the remission of sins, and the like ; but rather to show in each of these beliefs the spiritual truth which is now latent. No blow, for example, can be struck so effectually against the notion that forgiveness is a sacerdotal and technical act, as by exhibiting forgiveness as a natural human faculty, the highest energy of which the human soul is capable, the truest form of sacrifice, based on the deepest faith. The nature of self-sacrificing forgiveness, the uplifting effect upon the sinful, and its power to justify all those who have faith to accept it, these are phenomena not indeed obtainable by experiment (because the very thought of experimenting on the highest emotions is not to be entertained), but verifiable by the commonest experiences of the commonest lives. It will be then seen that the power of remitting sins is imparted to every Christian by the Spirit of Christ, and that it was part of His Good News that He had brought down this power from heaven, in a strength before unknown, and diffused it among men. In the same way every Christian doctrine being analysed and illustrated by the experience of life, will be stripped of all its corruptions and all its terrors ; and the written Gospel of Christ, while

itself receiving light from the unwritten commentaries of the gospel of daily life, will also shed fresh light and sanctity upon all the ordinary relations and actions of mankind. This is one of the firmest foundations for belief in Christ. Plain men and women who do not read history or understand geology, and who cannot therefore understand the witness of the work of the Word, not yet made flesh for us, can none the less understand the harmony between Christ the Word of God as revealed in the pages of the New Testament, and Christ the Word of God as revealed in the relations of the Family.

Applying the constructive theory to the text of the New Testament, we ought by no means to make it our first business to attack certain parts as interpolations, or certain narratives as erroneous. Such a course would induce some to cast the whole of the Gospels at once aside, as being the work of fraud; while others, in their determination not to reject the New Testament as a whole, will determine to retain it as a whole, errors as well as truths. But the right course is to begin from certainties and to rise from them to probabilities. Thus beginning with those passages which are common to the first three Gospels we must show, (1) that there existed, antecedent to any of them, an

Original Tradition, which exhibits Jesus of Nazareth as the Founder of a religion, or rather as the originator of a social Revolution, based upon the principle that all men are to be brothers in a divine family wherein God is Father; (2) that the Life therein described—though unique in history, and though it reveals One who unquestionably offered Himself to His disciples as the source of Forgiveness and Peace, and the sustenance of the souls of men—is nevertheless not mythical but necessary, as a historical fact, for the explanation of the history of the Christian Church.

Not till this has been done shall we pass to consider the miraculous element in the Original Tradition. We shall then find that many of the miracles of healing are indirectly supported by the testimony of St. Paul, who in his Epistles assumes as a matter of course that he also had performed instantaneous cures. What the Disciples could do—whether through their influence on the highly-wrought imagination or from whatever other cause—that we may well believe the Master Himself could do. These therefore we accept as a class, but not binding ourselves to accept each individual instance. For it occurs to us that if Jesus possessed the power of healing some diseases, it was inevitable (in an age which was not in the

habit of distinguishing between things according to nature and things against nature) that He should be supposed to have healed all diseases; and round a nucleus of historical acts of healing an accretion of unhistorical miracles might easily cluster. As regards the other miracles we find that they may have in each case arisen from the misunderstanding of metaphors and particularly of eucharistic metaphor.¹ But here we are in the region, not of certainty, but of probabilities. All we shall assert is, that *if* these miracles are non-historical, they by no means imply deceit in the narrators, or discredit the non-miraculous part of the narrative.

Passing thence to those parts of the Gospels which are common to two narrators, and last of all to those parts which are peculiar to each of the three, we shall note the gradual amplification of the miraculous element in the narrative of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, and in each

¹ An attempt has been made in a recently published work called "Philochristus" to embody this theory. But the author of that work, although perhaps justified in giving an approximate explanation where he was precluded by the limits of his narrative from giving the true explanation, must nevertheless have known that the full exposition of the origin of the miraculous element requires at least the lapse of a generation from the time of the death of Christ.

case we trace the influence of (1) prophecy ; (2) heathen religions ; (3) Eastern metaphor acting on Western literalism ; (4) the ritual and language of the Lord's Supper ; (5) the universal predilection for the marvellous ; (6) the fall of Jerusalem. But this analysis, by enabling us to detach later accretions from the living words of the Lord Himself, so far from destroying or obscuring the great central Character of the Gospels, will only serve to bring Him out in clearer relief, towering above all miracles and fulfilments of Messianic prophecies, and revealing Himself, not as a worker of material wonders, nor as a prophet of material futurities, but as spiritually powerful and spiritually wise.

At this stage it is important to point out that these late additions to the Gospel, though possibly or probably not historical, nevertheless represent spiritual truths, in material shapes which were perhaps necessary to make the truths intelligible to the Church. For example, we all believe that Jesus is, spiritually, the only-begotten Son of God ; the Healer of the souls of men ; the Worker of mighty deliverances ; who raises them that are dead in sin ; who satisfies the hungry soul ; who guides the Church through the Tempest ; whose path is on the deep waters of sin

and misery as He hastes to deliver them that perish; and who rises triumphant from death, and manifests Himself in increased power to the hearts of His disciples. This we all believe. But probably these beliefs would never have been handed down to us had they not been clothed in accounts of material transactions. These accounts still remain, and are considered by some of us historical, by others not historical, by others doubtful. The difference between us and others, therefore, is this, that what we believe to be spiritually true of Christ, others believe to be true not only spiritually but materially. If so, we are spiritually agreed; the difference between us and them is merely an intellectual one. But for them, no less than for us, it is a matter of vital importance (as well as for the increasing multitude who suspend their judgment about the miracles) that their spiritual belief should be independent of a material shape which is already rejected by many Christians, and likely, before long, to be rejected by all.

Turning from the work of the Word of God made flesh, to the work of the Word in other ages, we should attempt to show how one thread of purpose pervades the whole web; how, since the resurrection of Christ, the successes or failures

of the Church may be explained by fulfilment or neglect of His precepts, and how, before His incarnation, the conflicts of nations prepared the way for His doctrine of peace. But here, in our contemplation of the earlier of these two periods, science steps in to help us; for in treating of the times before the incarnation, we are brought into contact with the recent discoveries and speculations of students who have investigated the origin and growth of mankind.

To specialists it must be left to discuss and to establish the truths of their special studies, and, among others, the true theory of the origin and development of the human race. But even a non-specialist, pondering, without criticising, their discussions and speculations, may be permitted to ask, "Supposing this theory of the Origin of mankind to be established, what do I learn from it concerning the working of the Eternal Word?": and the answer to that question lies outside the province of specialists, and may be returned by any intelligent person—an answer full of delight for those who desire to see the universe declare the glory of God. For the new theory of the Origin of mankind reveals progress where we fancied we had discerned retrogression, and brings out more clearly than ever the thread of the same redeeming

purpose which is manifested in the work of the Word made flesh. We see indeed, as before, conflict and death : but whereas, according to the old theory, death stepped in as an after-thought and as an arbitrary unimproving penalty, now, according to the new theory, death and conflict are found from the first subserving progress and preparing the way for higher forms of life. We see as before, Evil : but whereas, according to the old theory, Evil gained a triumph over good, so that *it repented the Lord that He had made man*, now according to the new theory, Evil is from the first subordinated to Good, and sin itself is but the dark shadow cast by human free-will as it emerges from animal instinct ; a fall indeed in appearance, but in reality an ascent from the innocence of ignorance to the righteousness that is bred by repentance and faith. As one example of the fascinating inferences derivable from this new theory, we may take the hypothesis of the origin of the belief in spirits and hence in the immortality of soul. It is supposed to have been deduced from visions of the departed appearing to the survivor during his dreams by night. If this be so, can we have a better example of the utilization of seeming waste and of the triumph of weak things over the strong, than that Night and Sleep should be used

by the divine Word as His messengers to prepare the way for the triumph over Death by instilling into the minds of men the ennobling suggestions of immortality ?

Too much stress cannot be laid upon the present duty of Christians to construct, while destroying. In the building up of some simple form of Christianity lies the only hope for the working classes of England and consequently for the whole nation at large in the generation that is to come. There is no danger that working men will become Romanists or ritualists: but there is a great danger that from a state of indifference they will pass into hostility against Christianity, when the truth once penetrates far enough downward that the New Testament is not wholly and literally true. The English mind is naturally (which is one of its merits) intolerant of falsehood, but consequently apt (which is one of its defects) to make no distinction between illusions and lies. Therefore against the total rejection of the New Testament and of Christ with it, the only safeguard is that Englishmen of all classes, and especially of the poorest, should be accustomed to recognise in the Life of Christ a solid and indestructible ground-work of historical fact and spiritual truth, applicable to the needs of every

age and nation, and directly bearing upon the exigencies of the present time.

But the working men of England will never realise Christ as the Son of God till they have realised Him as the Son of man. Christ therefore they should be taught to regard as their true though invisible Leader in all rightful efforts to uplift the poor. They should be brought to look on the Carpenter of Nazareth as the Originator of a vast Revolution, as yet only in its beginning; a Revolution tending to genuine and universal Liberty, Fraternity and Equality; a Revolution assuredly destined to be consummated in due time, but likely to be retarded now, as it was a hundred years ago, by all attempts to inaugurate it with the aid of violence. In Christ they should recognise the Champion of Liberty against Despotism; the Condemner of pride, pomp, luxury and every other artificial distinction between man and man; the Liberator who prepared the way for the destruction of slavery, and who is preparing the way for the destruction of war, by leading mankind to those first principles of life which are ultimately to break down all hostile barriers between nations as well as between individuals; the Just One who judges all things as they are, not as they seem; the True One who

loathes all lies, and who specially selected religious falsehood and conventional morality to blast them for all ages with His ever-following curse. Thence they must pass upward to the contemplation of Him not as the mere Tribune of an oppressed class, but as the Elder Brother of all humanity. In Him they must see the type of social fellowship; in Him the incarnation of pity, trustfulness, and love; in Him the unique expression of that passionate sympathy which should lead the strong to bear the burdens of the weak.

In other words, Christ, and the Church of Christ should supplant, or rather supplement and elevate, trades unions, by enabling them to supply for the poor all, and far more than all, that they can supply at present—zeal without class-selfishness, unity without class-antagonism, determination to lift up the poor without unnecessary or vindictive depression of the rich, perpetual inducement to self-sacrifice, and bright hopes of a continuous progress in this present life. If this can be done, there is no fear that more will not be done. Never will any who accept Christ as their Leader for their work below, fail ultimately to follow His guidance when it leads them upward to a yet higher life above. Let the most anti-religious secularists but consent to take Christ

in this spirit as the practical guide of their actions for a few brief years in the wilderness of this mortal life, and they will soon find themselves unconsciously answering the question of their invisible Helper *Whom say ye that I am?* with St. Peter's words, *Thou art the Redeemer, the Son of the Living God.* On the rock of this confession, and on no other, is there a hope that our nation may build up a permanent greatness unimperilled by civil discord.

2. Our second rule was that we are to distinguish between ascertained truth and unascertained.

This rule may seem so obvious as scarcely to need formal statement: but the neglect of it in Germany has been among the causes which have stricken with barrenness nearly a century of theological criticism. Very melancholy is the succinct history of German criticism on the Synoptic Gospels, given by Dr. Holtzmann in Schenkel's *Bibel-Lexicon*. The impression produced by it amounts to this, that no theory of the origin of the Gospels has been so baseless as not to find some advocate to support it (often with the acrimony inspired by personal attacks and recriminations) in "a lifelong struggle" with the scarcely less absurd supporters of some other

theory equally baseless and barren. The main cause of all this mischief has been the neglect to distinguish between certainties and probabilities, and to begin with the former. Each disputant has felt himself bound to bring forward at his debut some complete theory to *save all the phenomena* of the Synoptists: there has been a complete neglect of the laws of induction; immense labour, but labour with a bias; vast treasures of evidence, but evidence unclassified or, classified perversely in the interest of a preconceived theory; and no attempt at all to verify the results of Synoptic criticism by comparing them with the results of the criticism of other documents. And what has been the end of it all? The riddle was given up in pusillanimous despair: and when Strauss came forward in 1835 to say that there was no riddle at all worth guessing, for that the Gospels were nothing but one mass of myths, not only desultory readers, but even sober scholars, were ready to accept his conclusions for very weariness, and to leave unexplained and confessedly inexplicable the origin of the greatest Revolution in the history of the world!

Thus German criticism exhibits, not a conquest nor a progress, but rather a wandering in the wilderness. We in England, who have been

content to dwell like slaves in the bonds of an Egyptian ignorance, should be the last to scoff at our German brethren who have wandered and explored for us, unsuccessfully, in the search after knowledge and spiritual freedom. Nevertheless the fact must not be concealed, that the success has been hitherto small, and deservedly small. The respect that every scholar must feel for the labours of Holtzmann, Weiss and others, cannot be extended to all. Of far too many volumes of German theology it must be confessed, that when we seek help from them, we find scarcely one suggestive thought or useful piece of information amid many pages of negative polemics and personalities, and many more of wind-begotten, wind-begetting theory. These are no guides to us; or if guides, helpful only to teach us what we must avoid: we mourn over them as over the bones of hapless travellers *overthrown in stony places*. Let those who get up theological controversies for the purpose of shining in modern conversation be permitted for another generation to admire indiscriminately all German criticism, and, on the strength of it, to efface Jesus of Nazareth from history by calling Him a myth: but to scholars and seekers after truth, reviewing the poor results of a century of wandering towards

a Promised land of Truth not yet attained, it must needs be evident that there has been a protracted failure, the causes of which must not be suppressed either by our gratitude to the laborious many, or by our admiration for the successful few. It is the old story. These wanderers in the wilderness have refused to hear the Voice of Truth and have hardened their hearts against Induction, and Truth has pronounced upon them her inevitable sentence: *they have not entered into her rest*. Instead of admiration, they deserve respectful pity, not without gratitude for the warning which they have transmitted to us their followers: *these things were our examples, to the end we should not lust after immediate demonstrations as they also lusted; and they are written for our admonition: wherefore let him that standeth take heed lest he fall*.

Let us then make up our minds that, at present, we have attained few certain results about the origin of the Synoptic Gospels, and that we shall attain very few more without a great deal of mechanical labour, undertaken without prepossessions, but with more attention than has yet been paid to the classification of evidence. The river will not be bridged without much

preliminary pile-driving. Just as Bacon's researches into heat were clever but barren, and could hardly but be barren till the thermometer had been invented, so the German theorists of the early part of this century might theorize prettily enough, but could hardly do more, till Bruder arose to help them with his Concordance for the Greek New Testament. Bruder has been the pile-driver of this century: and if Holtzmann, Weiss, and others seem at last on the point of pushing forth a substantial arch or two into the stream, it is because Bruder has been before them.

In addition to the mechanical help of a Concordance, now supplied, we need a harmony of the Synoptic Gospels shewing by different types and colours (1) the matter common to the three Synoptists; (2) the matter common to each pair; (3) the matter peculiar to each one. With the aid of this harmony it will be possible not merely to suggest, nor merely to make probable, but to demonstrate—as certainly as a proposition of Euclid, and in such a manner as to prevent further controversy on the point—that St. Mark's Gospel, in many passages, contains an original tradition from which St. Matthew and St. Luke borrowed. It may be also easily made in the

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highest degree probable (and with a little labour, that probability may be made to reach certainty itself) that all the three Gospels are borrowed from one antecedent Greek tradition. These two facts may be accepted as facts: and on these a great superstructure of inference may be built up as to the date, authenticity, and object of the three Gospels, some of which inferences it will be possible to support with such a force of converging evidence as to obtain for them general acceptance. Nevertheless, for some time, it will be well, even with exaggerated and obtrusive caution, to mark off the probable from the certain, and, as it were, to warn the public off that part of the bridge which is not, properly speaking, a part of the bridge at all, but only a kind of wooden out-work or scaffolding intended to hold the pile-drivers and bridge-makers. About the Gospels, at present, this is the sum of our knowledge. We know that they cannot be explained away by the myth theory; we know that they point to an antecedent Tradition; and we know that this antecedent Tradition contains the record of a Life unique in the history of the world. Beyond this, we have several defensible conjectures, but—at least in the English sense of the word—no knowledge.

3. Our third rule was, that we are to distinguish between teaching and exploring.

In every transition, and especially in religious transition, it is not always easy to do one's duty consistently as a teacher and as an explorer. In astronomy for example, Galileo writing to Kepler in 1597, informs the latter that he had adopted the new system of astronomy several years before, though he continued to teach the old or Ptolemaic system. Is this conduct to be imitated by ministers preaching to mixed congregations, and by teachers and tutors of the young? In a time of transition, many statements are put forward and supported with more or less of cogency, varying from barely possible speculations to almost recognised certainties. What degree of probability, then, will justify the teacher, for example, of the highest form of a public school in teaching that a particular miraculous narrative in the Old or New Testament is probably not historical, but the result of some misunderstanding?

The answer which the experience of the present writer would suggest, is, that although a teacher or minister ought under no circumstances to teach anything that is contrary to his own convictions, yet he ought with equal caution to abstain from inculcating with the authority of

his position, upon those who are not his equals in knowledge and who have not the opportunity of argument or reply, anything that is directly contrary to the present convictions of the great majority of those, or the parents of those, whom he is addressing.

Such abstention is dictated by two motives. In the first place, however certain the teacher may be of the truth of his theories, it does not seem fair to enforce them *ex cathedra*, nor to pretend to discuss them with those who cannot discuss them on equal terms. In the second place, the teacher or minister who is a sincere Christian has before him one paramount duty, that of leading others to the worship of Christ; and this task is so absorbing and exacting in its demands on his time and his powers of illustration that, if he does justice to it, he will probably find as little leisure as inclination to dwell upon negations and disputes. *Solvitur ambulando*. Let any one stand up to preach in the presence of some hundreds of people, young and old, learned and unlearned, all needing to be helped to understand Christ better, and to have their weakness strengthened by practical participation in His living Spirit; or let him come into a class-room to teach boys who have not yet learned to distinguish

between wonder and worship, between forgiveness and indulgence, between faith in a person and faith about a person, besides being absolutely ignorant of the state of Jewish society in the time of Christ—and the most ingenious artificer of “the religious difficulty” (even in this somewhat difficult time of religious transition) will find that he can elaborate no difficulty at all. For where a man is thus honestly, however imperfectly, striving to preach Christ or to teach Christ in a natural way, there is a Presence in the very atmosphere that makes both hypocritical teaching and proselytizing teaching equally revolting and equally impossible.

Circumstances may no doubt occur where two conscientious teachers may act somewhat differently. For example, in dealing with the miraculous narrative in the Old Testament which describes the staying of the sun at the bidding of Joshua, one teacher may adhere to a fixed rule, viz., to ignore in the classroom all questions concerning the miraculous element in the Scriptures. Another—knowing that the pupils now before him were perhaps an hour ago studying astronomy, and feeling bound to help them over a possible stumbling-block—may give them what appears to him the correct explanation of the passage.

And this he may be the more ready to do, because he knows that the parents of his pupils place in their hands without any hesitation, the *Speaker's Commentary* which tells them that "The whole passage may and even ought, on critical grounds, to be taken as a fragment of unknown date and uncertain authorship interpolated into the text of the narrative." In this case probably the majority of teachers would do well to adopt the latter and the bolder course.

But, on the other hand, in reading the Gospel of St. Matthew, coming to that undoubtedly exceptional miracle which describes the finding of the coin in the fish's mouth, some teachers may feel bound to point out the singularity of the narrative, and to express in language even more explicit than that used by Canon Farrar (*Life of Christ*, Vol. ii. p. 46), their "doubt whether in this instance some essential particular may not have been either omitted or left unexplained;" while other more reticent teachers (among whom the present writer would rank himself), preferring to say nothing rather than so little, would pass over the narrative without any remark at all. Possibly the lapse of a very few years may in this case also justify or even dictate the bolder course; but where there is a doubt, the fear of unfairness to those who

have not the right of reply or the power of discussion on equal terms, may well turn the scale in favour of silence.

But reticence in teaching does not necessitate reticence in discussion, where one is dealing no longer with inferiors but with equals or superiors in learning. Here, therefore, it seems one's duty simply to put forward the views that appear most probable, and, after stating them with clearness and supporting them to the best of one's ability, to leave the matter in the hands of those who are competent to investigate and to decide. One may regret that there is not a separate language for investigators, unintelligible to desultory readers: but the duty of seekers after truth to seek it at all hazards and by all means, seems so obvious that any departure from it may fairly be regarded as a serious dereliction. And in the present instance, as the author is not now preaching but writing, and writing for readers who are supposed to have given some attention to the study of the New Testament, there would seem something like an insincere suppression if he did not frankly avow his belief that the time has now come when the miraculous element (with the reservation of some of the works of healing, and of some visible manifestations of the spiritual resurrection of the

Saviour) may be regarded as doubtful or un-historical without any prejudice to the worship of Christ—a belief which may be summarised in the following extract :¹—

“To any one who has studied the divine training of children, of nations, and of churches through illusions (not delusions), which, for a time, partly conceal the truths which they inclose and preserve, it will not seem strange that Providence should preserve, through records of physical miracles, the truth that Jesus was the worker of spiritual miracles; and through literal quasi-fulfilments of written prophecies, the truth that Jesus fulfilled the unwritten aspirations and tendencies of humanity from its first creation. If, indeed, the miraculous element in the synoptics were a mere ‘pious fraud,’ then we could not help fearing that, here and there at all events, some of the words of the Lord Jesus

¹ This extract is from a work, part of which may be found in an article entitled “Gospels,” in the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. While gratefully acknowledging the very ample space placed at his disposal by the Editors, the author desires to take this opportunity of stating that the omission of these, and other passages, arises not from the author's reticence, nor in any great degree from the want of space, but from the feeling of the Editors (probably a very just one) that an *Encyclopædia* should be a book of reference rather than a collection of discussions.

might have been vulgarised and falsified by passing through the dishonest medium; but if we once admit that miracles were certain to be attributed to Jesus, whether He wrought them or not, because they would be assumed as necessary both by Jews and Gentiles, both by friends and foes, then all suspicion of dishonesty vanishes at once, and the non-miraculous element remains as credible as ever.

“The vast majority of Christians will probably continue, for many years to come, to believe in physical miracles; and as long as this physical integument is necessary to preserve the belief in Christ’s spiritual powers it is most desirable that this belief should be general wherever it can be honestly and sincerely entertained. But there is an increasing minority who may find it difficult to believe in the physical miracles, and who too hastily conclude that, if they reject them, they must reject the Gospel as a whole. For their sakes, it is most important to recollect that the physical miraculous element in the New, is no more essential than the miraculous element in the Old Testament. No one now, at least no educated person, believes in the literal accuracy of the narrative of the Mosaic creation, the stopping of the sun, and the like; yet who does not read the Old Testament

with increased rather than diminished reverence, and with a fresher recognition of the guiding hand, moulding a people of priests and princes, now that he is delivered from bondage to the cramping letter of the mere outward and literal expressions of spiritual truth, which have become antiquated and oppressive to modern thought? The day is perhaps distant, but not so distant as it may seem to some, when men will be enabled to read the New Testament with the same freedom, and as a consequence to worship Christ with a firmer faith and deeper reverence."

SERMONS.

SERMONS.

THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION.

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.—ST. LUKE VI. 38.

THUS the words stand in our authorised version; but it is well known that a slight change is necessary to make the version exactly accurate. Instead of men we should read **THEY**, meaning by **THEY** the angels and ministers of The Supreme, much in the same way as in the well-known saying of one of the Jewish Fathers, "Whoso profaneth the name of Heaven in secret, **THEY** punish him openly."¹ If we ask who are these angels and ministers, we find an answer in the Psalm which tells us how the whole world and all the elements thereof minister unto the Almighty, who *walketh upon the wings of the wind* and who maketh His

¹ This, and the following quotations, are taken from Mr. C. Taylor's *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, Cambridge University Press, 1877.

ministers a flaming fire. By THEY, therefore, we mean the world in action upon men. We do not exclude the children of men, but we include a great deal more—we include all things that are. Thus then interpreted our text will run, *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall all things visible and invisible give into your bosom.*

The most suggestive of English philosophers predicted that a time would come when there should exist a Highest, or, as he termed it, a First Philosophy, which should *contain all such profitable observations and axioms as fall not within the compass of any of the special parts of philosophy or science, but are more common and of a higher stage.* Certainly in these words of our Lord, if in any words, we seem to find one of these axioms of a First Philosophy, higher even than that which was contemplated by Bacon. For this saying is common to art, to science, to morals, and, if we would believe it, even to politics. *Give, and it shall be given to you*—these words go to the root of all Christ's teaching, and shed light upon the whole of His work on earth and in heaven; for all His words and works are based upon the Law of Retribution.

But what was this Law of Retribution? The notions of the Jews about retribution were very clearly defined, even to a quaint minuteness of detail. It is a common saying in the Talmud that with what measure a man measures THEY measure

unto him. But take one or two of their instances. Samson, who followed the desire of his eyes, was deprived of his eyes. Absalom, who prided himself upon his hair, was hung up by his hair. The great Hillel, seeing a skull floating on the face of the water, said to it, *Because thou drownedst, they drowned thee, and in the end they that drowned thee shall be drowned.* Other instances might be given to show how strong and at the same time how arbitrary and artificial a hold the Law of Retribution had on the Jewish mind.

But now, what was our Lord's teaching on the Law of Retribution? When He said *Give, and it shall be given unto you*, did He mean no more than this: give so many shekels, and ye shall receive so many more shekels, or ye shall receive so much happiness in heaven? Impossible. Such a supposition is not only derogatory, it is inconsistent with the whole of His teaching, and particularly with His use of these very same words in a context which expressly connects them with the giving and receiving of spiritual knowledge. *Take heed what ye hear; with what measure ye mete it shall be meted to you; and again, Freely ye have received, freely give.*

Here let us pause to collect a few of the other sayings of our Lord bearing on the Law of Retribution. *Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. Whosoever will be great among you, let*

him be your minister. Forgive and ye shall be forgiven. Judge not, that ye be not judged. Strangest of all are the two following sayings:—*He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward; and again, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*

Receive now, in this life, houses and lands, and mothers *an hundredfold!* The saying, if interpreted according to the letter, is meaningless; yet the wording of the letter is evidently intentional. Some series of exact correspondences is hinted at; there is some reference to a Law of Retribution. Light perhaps may be thrown on this passage by the one previously quoted, *He that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.* Here at least a natural law is apparent, a law of sympathy, a spiritual law, stating the spiritual results of spiritual causes. Whoso receiveth into his heart a righteous man, that is to say a man that observeth the commandments of the law, he by sympathy will

identify himself with them that observe the commandments, and will receive as a consequence that blessing which springs from such observance ; but whoso receiveth a prophet, or a son of God, will identify himself with a nobler rank in the hierarchy of God, and will naturally receive a nobler blessing. Clearly our Lord is not here speaking of any arbitrary reward, so many shekels for so much service, no, nor even so much joy in heaven for so much self-sacrifice on earth. A Law of Retribution is in His mind, divine, but none the less orderly and immovable ; self-executing, but none the less divine, being the very voice of the Father in heaven.

Note here, by the way, that no teacher in this age nor in any age ever recognised that high unchangeable Will which we call Law more reverentially than that Teacher who was the Son of God. When He is asked to give by favour the chief places about His throne, He replies that they are not His to give, save to them for whom they have been prepared. This word *prepared* is often in His mouth to describe the nature and source of all His mighty words and works. He must do the works, He says, that have been prepared for Him to do. If He forgives, it is because He discerns faith, or at least such a germ of faith as can be quickened into life by the very utterance of the words, *I forgive*. But He cannot forgive the soul, nor heal the body, where there is no faith. *Be it unto thee*, He says to one, *according to thy faith*. It is true

that to another He says, *All things are possible*; but He adds, *to him that believeth*. And when He says, *All things are possible*, He seems to mean, not that God will at any moment reverse His own laws, but that there is no limit to the redeeming power of God where faith is present. For when He Himself said, *If it be possible*, did not He imply, and proclaim to us for all time, that there are certain things which are not possible?

Thus the whole of the doctrine of Christ is based upon a recognition of Law, pointing indeed always to an ultimately perfect future, but through a path of long, painful, necessary, and natural processes. As the wheat springs from the good seed and the tares from the bad, so it is with the spiritual harvest; as summer is known to be at hand when the fig-tree puts forth her leaves, so is the coming of the Redeemer to be discerned by the throes and pangs of human nature yearning for deliverance. Wars and rumours of war will precede that Advent, but the exact hour is not known even to the angels of heaven; no, not to the Son, but to the Father only.

Even the dull and blinded Pharisees are reproached for not discerning the signs of the times as they discerned the signs of the weather. Everywhere effect is traced to cause, and the future predicted from the present. Peace was to be at last, but peace through the sword, and concord through division. He Himself was destined to send a fire upon earth, which should destroy as well as purify.

The wise and prudent must needs be blinded to the Gospel ; yea, even among the poorer and simpler sort, the great mass would see and not perceive, would hear and not understand, lest they should be converted and healed. His disciples must needs betray Him or forsake Him. He Himself must needs be rejected and slain. Against Jesus of Nazareth who shall bring the charge that He prophesied smooth things or subordinated insight to desire ? Never surely did prophet more clearly or dispassionately discern and realise, coming in between the baseness of the imperfect present and the far-off ideal of the perfect WILL BE, the intervening pain of the inevitable MUST BE.

But what then was the theory of the kingdom of heaven based upon this strange Law of Retribution — *Give, and it shall be given unto you ?* Briefly it was this : All true kingdom, and all true power, arise from knowledge. But all true knowledge consists in knowing the causes of things. Therefore, the cause of all things being a Father, it follows that the basis of all true kingdom or power is the knowledge of the Father in Heaven. But the knowledge of the Father is necessarily only to be attained by those who can approach Him as children, and who can give up their hearts to Him as simply and unreservedly as earthly children themselves trust to the love of earthly parents. Therefore *give, and it shall be given unto you* : give your life unto God, and they (the angels and ministers of the Father) shall give you back your life

multiplied a hundredfold. Thus interpreted, the words mean much the same as that other well-known saying, *Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*

By the heroes, and conquerors, and law-givers of the ancient world, this Law of Retribution was not recognised. Compared with Jesus of Nazareth the best of them were but as thieves and robbers. They had striven to regenerate the world by force, by arbitrary constraint, coming as it were over the wall, and over-riding human nature; but Christ came to regenerate the world by the suasion of natural forces, coming into the fold through the gate of childhood and working through the Law of Retribution. The old redeemers of the world approached mankind and approached inanimate nature aggressively in the attitude of the braggadocio, to whom the world was but as it were *an oyster which he with sword would open.* Therefore they knocked at the door, but the porter opened it not, and the sheep would not hear their voice. Their empires failed; the fabric of their sciences fell to pieces like the leaves of a premature frost-bitten flower. But the new Redeemer approaching mankind in the unaggressive attitude of a child, coming through the gate of love, and being Himself the very archetype of love, and the eternal Child of the Father in Heaven, needed but to touch the door, and lo it flew open, and the sheep hear His voice, and He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out. All this

was the natural result of law, the Law of Retribution. Christ gave Himself to mankind, and received back in return the brightness of His love, reflected from the hearts of all that had felt its vitalising warmth.

Yet we shall never understand Christ's Law of Retribution aright unless we bear in mind that our Lord in all His words and works dealt always with invisible things. For to Jesus of Nazareth all visible things on earth were only so far of import as they testified to their purpose in the mind of God, that is, to their invisible counterparts in heaven. How poor and petty to Him seemed all substantial and tangible objects as compared with words, which are the expression of thoughts ! *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.* When, therefore, He spoke of great works and mighty works, He did not mean the destruction of trees or uprooting of mountains, but the destruction of sins and the uprooting of deeply-planted errors. Even in the language of the teachers of His countrymen an UPROOTER OF MOUNTAINS signified a remover, not of material, but of spiritual obstacles. Much more therefore when Jesus of Nazareth declared that His disciples should hereafter do greater works than He had done, He meant not that they should cure more diseases or cast out more unclean spirits, but that they should *uproot the mountain* of spiritual error which has crushed down the hearts of the children of men. Can we doubt that to the Son of God who seeth

things as they are, the healing of the lame man by St. Peter or the destruction of Ananias by the same Apostle, though mighty works indeed, were not so mighty as the conception of that sublime hymn on charity composed in the days of Nero by a pupil of the Rabbi Gamaliel, whereby the Spirit of Christ speaks to mankind through St. Paul for ever and ever. The story of Ananias and Sapphira shall pass away, but St. Paul's praise of charity shall never pass away.

Not that our Lord walked through the midst of this beautiful world as some of the Pharisees are said to have done, with eyes half-closed, muttering passages from the Law or from the Mishna. *He who is walking by the way, said a certain Rabbi, and studying, and breaketh off his Mishna and sayeth, How fine is that tree! How fine is this fallow!* THEY account it to him as though he were guilty of death. But with our Master it was not so. Trees and fallows, flowers and harvests, shepherds seeking the strayed sheep in the wilderness or keeping the flock safe in the fold, sunshine and rain, birds of the air on their flight for food, children playing round the well, women at their household work leavening bread or sweeping the floor for a lost coin—all these things escaped Him not, and yet so far from causing Him to break off his study, they blended with His teaching and strengthened His communion with the Father in heaven.

Nay, may we not go a step further? St. Luke tells us that Jesus of Nazareth increased in wisdom

as well as in stature; the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews adds that He was heard in that He feared, and that He learned obedience from the things that He suffered. Is it more bold or less reverent to believe that He was heard also in that He loved, and that He learned obedience also from the things He looked upon and enjoyed? Surely it must needs have been so. Could the wind blow whither it listeth and whence no man knoweth; could rain and sunshine come down to earth on their errands of love; could the lilies of the fields spring up, and blossom, and fade; could all these ministers of the Father bring their subtle messages of love, and joy, and trust, to all the children of men, and yet bring no message to Him who called Himself by the especial title of the Son of Man? Surely of all wastes the strangest and most terrible waste would have been that the Son of Man should have lived, say rather that He should have gone through the form of living, for more than thirty years on earth, and yet during all that time should have learned nothing from that world which His Father had made and pronounced very good.

But you say, *Though He was the Son of Man, yet He was also the Son of God.* He was. He was the very Son of God; from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, and now made flesh for us; a man, and not the semblance of a man, walking on earth amid the flowers and trees and waters, moving amid the elements and forces of the universe, and recognising in them the angels and ministers of

His Father in Heaven. But what then? Because He was the Son, was He to take upon Himself to turn the servants of His Father from their appointed tasks? Was He not rather to manifest His exceptional Sonship by an exceptional readiness to obey?

He was hungry: but should He stamp on the ground to raise an instantaneous harvest, or should He turn the stones to bread? That be far from Him. He was athirst: yet should He strike water from the rock? He longed that men should trust in Him, yet should He work a sign in heaven or cast Himself down from a pinnacle to procure the instant allegiance of all Israel? Nay, it was not to be; it was a voice of Satan. Let the ancient records of the wandering of the Chosen People assign to Moses the power of striking water from the rock; let the legends of the Conquest and the stories of the Prophets declare that Joshua caused the sun to stand still in heaven, and that Elijah called down fire from heaven upon his adversaries. That spirit was not His. They were but as servants in the house of the Father; but He was the Son. Rather let the Son of God subject Himself to the friendly pressure of the forces of His Father, and what He gave would come back to Him an hundredfold. Thus did the true and only Son of God move as a source of Light, not only amid the children of men, but even amid the inanimate and unconscious world, and power streamed from Him even to all inanimate and unconscious

things, and He received back the light reflected from Himself as a light bestowed upon Him.

How the Law of Retribution was worked by Christ in His dealings with the children of men is too well known to need description. Armour of sensuality, panoply of selfishness, thick-plated, ten-fold, adamant breastplate of worldliness, forged round a publican's heart by avarice and tempered by the hatred of the poor and by the scorn of the rich—all the proof mail of sin (save only hypocrisy), snapped like glass before the touch of His irresistible compassion. He gave His pity, and sinners repaid Him with repentance; He gave His confidence, and they paid Him back in a life of righteousness; He gave His love, and though they could never pay back as much as He gave them, yet in proportion to their natures, the love of publicans and sinners might be said to have matched the love of Christ Himself. True that He professed only to heal and to forgive where there was faith, yet His very word and utterance, and sometimes even His presence, had the power of engendering the faith that was needed. His trust justified itself by making the person trusted trustworthy.

So great was His power that He Himself marvelled at its scope and results, and accepted as a revelation the retribution of faith that comes back to Him. *It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs*: thus spoke He, as it were questioning His own Spirit and awaiting the

result: and there came back good measure into His bosom—the word of God speaking through a heathen woman, as it had spoken before through a foreign soldier, and declaring that the Law of Faith knoweth no distinctions of persons, and that many should come from the east and from the west, and sit down with the children of Abraham. Thus, therefore, in His dealings with human nature, no less than in His dealings with non-human nature, may it be said of Jesus of Nazareth that—

*Power streamed from Him, and His soul received
The light reflected as a light bestowed.*

The painful power of forgiving is one of the most notable instances of the general Law of Retribution. For what do we mean when we speak of remitting and retaining sins? Not surely the mere utterance of words; not surely the mere remission of penalty; but a spiritual process, a taking away of sin and an engendering of righteousness. Now, when a man has the faith and spirit of Christ so that he can discern a brother's heart with something of the insight of Christ, and can see the soul of goodness even in things most evil, so that he is honestly able to say to a sinner, *I trust you*, all the world knows what a magical, and yet what a natural power this gift of trust has to create a giving back of trust multiplied a hundredfold; whence springs up in the heart of the sinner a trust not only in the forgiver, but in human nature as made by God the Father, and hence a trust in

the ideal of human nature or Christ, and hence a trust in God the Father Himself. This trust is but another name for righteousness. Forgiveness itself is but a part of the working of the Law of Retribution.

This Law of Forgiveness (as every other law) was at work in the world of human hearts before the Word became flesh. But it was Jesus of Nazareth who first consciously used this law and revealed it unto mankind, not only by precept, but by example and influence; thereby so vivifying it that it became virtually a wholly new power or authority, namely, the authority given unto the Son of Man, and through Him to man, to forgive sins *now* and *upon earth*. This power He not only consciously used, but also exalted as being the very key to that temple built up out of the souls of men, which is called the Church. This power also He bequeathed unto His disciples, and to this day the power remains upon all who consciously or unconsciously are imbued with His spirit. But most of all should it remain among those who directly worship Christ; and to this day whoso hath not, albeit in slight measure, Christ's power of remitting and retaining sins, he is not Christ's disciple.

Our Lord has taught us to believe that this same Law of Retribution pervades the whole of our lives, and our relations with all things—with lands and with houses, as well as with fathers and mothers. All these relations, He has taught us, will be

purified and their value multiplied an hundredfold in the new Kingdom of Heaven. For Christ despised not visible things, but honoured them because they testified of the Father. Bread and wine and raiment, and the mirth of feasting ; houses, and lands, and money, and all material wealth ; fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, husbands or wives—all these visible objects were to Him so many shapes in which the Everlasting Arms of the ever-watching Providence stretched itself out into the world, moulding and shaping the children of men into the image of the Child of God.

Into this mould human nature was cast, gifted, as clay is gifted, with a certain power of resisting pressure and preserving consistency, so as not to fall to pieces like sand ; but gifted also, as clay is gifted, with a certain power of yielding to the Divine pressure of the Heavenly Artist—gifted, in other words, with a will, and with the power to sacrifice that will to a Higher Will. Therefore whoso gave up any earthly blessing to God, he must needs receive from God that spiritual outcome from the earthly blessing which corresponded to the pressure of the heavenly Hand. Whoso gave up bread and wine, which fill man's heart with joy and gladness, should receive another food productive of a deeper joy and of gladness which none should take away ; whoso gave up houses or lands should receive a settled rooted thankfulness and peace in the prospect of the Happy Fields and the Eternal Home—an hundred-

fold surpassing the complacent thankfulness with which the owner of the cornfields surveys his labourers storing the golden harvest ; whoso gave up sister or brother should know the brotherhood of the Elder Brother of all humanity ; whoso gave up mother or father should know that which passeth knowledge, even the depths of the mystery of the Fatherhood of Him whose name is Love. Thus in all things, great or small, the same Law of Retribution should still prevail ; *Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and running over, shall they give into your bosom ; for with what measure ye mete, it shall be meted to you withal.*

Such, then, is the scope of the saying which we have ventured to call a part of the First Philosophy of Jesus, as being one of those *profitable observations and axioms that fall not within the compass of any special philosophy or service, but are more common and of a higher stage.* For to what province or department of life can this *profitable observation and axiom* be pronounced unsuitable or unnecessary ? Is it unfit for art ? But what can be more fit or needful than a warning that bids the artist delight in and honour all visible things, and go sit at the feet of Nature, forgetful of his own little dignities and petty eccentricities, to learn from her and to receive into his soul her whispered lessons ?

Is it unfit for science ? Why, where can you find such an amulet against the baneful superstition

which, says the poet, tramples all knowledge and all research under her accursed foot, as in the blessed certainty that whatever is faithfully given to the Universe shall come back multiplied an hundredfold? We have seen above that the Law of Retribution is but another shape of the saying that *Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. And what else is the requirement of the great herald and prophet of the Advancement of Learning, who predicted that men could never enter into the new kingdom of man over nature, unless they would study to be perfect in her language, and, becoming again as little children, condescend to take the alphabet of it into their own hands?

Is it unfit for the morals of social life? Christ's experience answers, No. Your own consciences answer, No. I grant that perhaps as much harm as good may sometimes have been done by that parody and caricature of Christ's saying, which represents Him as teaching us that every sacrifice is repaid by an arbitrary reward. But the Law of Retribution, as it was taught by Christ, as ordained by a Father in heaven, a law self-executing, natural, inevitable, who shall deny that this is at the very basis of all sound and healthy social existence?

Lastly, I ask, is it fit for art, fit for science, fit for morals, but only unfit for politics? "Yes," cries the present consent of the civilised world; "it is wholly unfit, it is a mere dream to suppose that it could ever be fit." Well, then, let Christ's spirit

be excluded from politics for one more generation. Yet there is nothing so glorious, so ideally perfect in the political history of the past as to make the present time unsuitable for reconsidering our rejection of Christ's teaching. The politics and politicians whose pole-star has been the balance of power or the preservation of national interests, have they been hitherto altogether successful in averting the disgraces, the disasters, and destructions of nations? For one case where a politician may seem to have done good in setting aside the interest of other nations, and unjustly preferring the apparent interests of his own nation as paramount, might not some maintain that there have been a score of cases where politicians have wrought desolation and ruin?

But let Christ's words be rejected for yet another generation: no nation can for ever reject them, and live. The Angels and Ministers of God are many, who shall teach us our error. War, with its train of famine, pestilence, and poverty—these are not the only appointed Ministers of God to punish the national violation of the law of Christ. Selfishness abroad begets (must needs beget, at least in a Christian country) selfishness at home.

It was a lesser evil for Greece and Rome to be selfish. They violated no principle, lowered no standard of the national conscience. They did not believe that God had made all the nations of the earth of one blood, to be the children of a common father. But a Christian nation does believe this,

and is bound (in virtue of its allegiance to Christ) to look upon other nations as brethren—to be punished perhaps, perhaps to be warred against ; if need be, even to be destroyed (just as we prosecute, and punish, and destroy offending individuals in a Christian society), but never to be despised or regarded with indifference, never to be regarded as stepping-stones whereon we can ascend to something which we choose to call our “national interests.”

Our “national interests !” In what a preposterous manner is this phrase perpetually abused ! No doubt the true and ultimate interests of every nation are the same as the interests of mankind, and as the interests of righteousness ; but what purpose, save the purposes of evil, can be fulfilled by putting interests first and righteousness second ? It is the interest of England, no doubt, that she should be known throughout the world as the liberator of slaves, the champion of the oppressed, the representative of honesty, the herald of the Gospel of Christ ; but what end except the degradation of England is gained by sinking all these noble objects and strength-inspiring motives, so that instead of saying that England should contend against slavery, against oppression, against dishonesty, and against all those shapes of sin which are the spiritual enemies of the Gospel of Christ, we must needs be perpetually exhibiting our country in the eyes of Christian Europe as ready to contend for nothing but her “national interests ?”

And mark the inevitable moral consequences of this preposterous error. If a Christian nation is to regard itself as created for its own interests, why should not a class in a Christian nation do the same? Why then may not the poorest of the poor, and the most illiterate of the illiterate, practise at home in behalf of their class those precepts of self-interest which they hear commended on the highest political authority as worthy to regulate the conduct of a Christian nation abroad? And if a class, why may not a Christian individual make his individual interests paramount, rejecting, first in practice and soon in theory also, the Christian rule of life, and substituting for it a rule of avowed and deliberate selfishness? Thus, from a selfish policy abroad, creeps into the heart of a selfish nation, even in its home, a disease that slowly but surely must destroy the national life.

To take an example from a well-known and recognised blemish in our foreign policy, I mean our opium trade with China. For the present, only a small, though probably a rapidly increasing number of our countrymen, are almost as keenly alive to the iniquities of that traffic as to the difficulties of abandoning it. But look forward ten more years to a time when the great masses of our population shall be moderately educated, at least so far as to know through the medium of the press what is going on in China, and what we have been doing there during the last thirty years. Then, under those changed circumstances, does any rational

being suppose (provided at least he believes that there is such a thing as moral cause producing moral effect)—does any one, I say, suppose that England can any longer continue deliberately to keep up the opium trade with China, when once the eyes of the people of England are opened to the nature and circumstances of that iniquitous traffic, without a consequent retribution poisoning the national conscience and indirectly tainting the morality of every city, every village, every household, every little child in England? Or does any one dream that the paltry half a million flung by way of alms to India can expiate for the annual extortion of say only five millions from China, to the ruin of the bodies and souls of thousands of the nations on which we impose the yoke of our pernicious trade? If therefore we must needs go on for yet another generation in our un-Christian course, let us at least have the merit of going with open eyes to our destruction. Let us not suppose that the eternal Law of Retribution can be broken for our sakes. Let us *give to other* nations, if we are so determined, a policy of narrowness, selfishness, and distrust. Be it so: it shall be *given to us again*. Our furies shall pursue us, lame-footed but sure: corruption, superstition, discontent, discord, and civil strife; *good measure, pressed down, and running over*, shall THEY *give into our bosom*.

All things move violently to their place, but easily in their place; and what is true of all things is true likewise of nations. If the nations of the

earth now move violently, it is because they are not yet in their place, not yet doing perfect homage to the incarnate Word of God. Nor will the nations of the earth ever cease to move violently and learn to move easily till they move in their place, each in its orbit about the throne of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, recognising in their international no less than in their domestic policy that Law of Retribution, or Law of childhood, or Law of love—call it what you will—which is a part of the First Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth.

CRITICISM AND WORSHIP.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.—ST. MATTHEW VII. 1.

I am nothing if not critical, says the most diabolical character ever conceived by human imagination; and it is this critical spirit that Christ seems here to prohibit; warning us, not surely against occasionally criticising, or occasionally judging, or occasionally condemning, but, as it would seem, against living in the critical spirit. Of course the ideal criticism or judgment is not here contemplated. The judgment of God, which discerns the motives of men, passing on each man such a self-executing sentence of approval or condemnation as is best for each—this is true mercy, as well as true judgment. But the judgment here contemplated is different. Man's imperfect judgment implies, for the most part, first, a fixed law; second, an attention to actions rather than motives; third, an isolation of the judge from those who are judged. Now Christ recognises no law, but a spirit; He takes cognisance not of action, but of motive; lastly, He forbids isolation. Therefore, in each of these three

points the ordinary attitude of judging is opposed to the attitude enjoined by Christ on His disciples. Let us consider, first of all, very briefly, this habit of criticising or *judging*; and then the necessity of casting away this habit of mind when we would approach Jesus of Nazareth.

The critical spirit is the opposite of the filial spirit; and, as the filial spirit is the foundation of the kingdom of God, so is the critical spirit of the kingdom of the Devil. The same Law of Retribution which opens art and science and nature, both animate and inanimate, to all who approach them in the spirit of a child, closes art and science and nature against all who approach in the attitude of a superior critic. The child or youth who criticises his parents and relations and companions, banishing from his own heart the sense of fatherhood, brotherhood, and friendship, finds critics where others find fathers, brothers, and friends. The student or artist in whom the spirit of criticism predominates always over admiration, sympathy, and reverence, often misses even in books and pictures the meaning and inspiration which he might else have perceived; and his own creative efforts are paralysed by the consciousness of the critical spirit within him and the dread of critical retaliation from without. Even in science it has been said by those best competent to speak, that there is scope for the imagination in suggesting the hypothesis that is to link facts into a harmonious law; and the great discoveries of nature have been made by those who instead of

approaching her as superior critics, were content to take her alphabet into their hands, sitting at her feet as little children. But if in art and in literature, and even in science, the critical spirit is unfavourable to the attainment of truth, it requires no argument to prove that it must be much more unfavourable to the attainment of the highest truth, that is, the knowledge of God.

How, then, are we to avoid the critical habit of mind in all things, and especially in religion? Are we to throw away our understanding and to say, *I believe because it is impossible*, or to cast away all use of reason and to say, *It is the heart that makes the theologian*? Surely a very mad and heathenish attempt at worship—a kind of self-marring and mutilation of the divine faculties of humanity, worthy rather of the priests of Cybele than of the worshippers of that God who long ago taught us that we are to love Him *with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength*! No, neither the brain alone, nor the heart alone, can lead men to the highest truth; body and brain and heart must combine together to help the human whole to obey the Divine attraction and to move in its assigned orbit. There is a symmetry in the human faculties which, if rightly developed, is intended to lead us to the knowledge of the highest truth through the course of a symmetrical life. Think of it a moment. Can you seriously suppose that you can arrive at the knowledge of the One True God by spending so many

hours in prayer daily, or by giving away such and such a proportion of your income, or by any other acts, considered as isolated acts? No: each of these acts may, if done in a right spirit, help you a certain way on your path; but the knowledge of God must be the product of a life in which every faculty is exercised. If the grand words of Edward Irving are true, that *all things do testify concerning the Lord Jesus, from the archangel in heaven to the worm that crawleth on the ground*, must it not be equally true that a great chain of intervening links of evidence testifies to each of us concerning the same Divine object—parents, friends, schools, books, art, science, nature, action and rest, reason and faith? And none of these testifying faculties can be with impunity neglected, and none of these departments of life (so far as we are brought naturally into them) can be with impunity despised. Instead, therefore, of asking how can we avoid the critical spirit, the wiser question will be, how can we so symmetrically develop all our faculties as to enter at last into that filial spirit which is Christ's Kingdom of God?

It can hardly be denied that for the younger students at the University there must be, amid the many wholesome influences here, some influences which tend to stimulate the critical faculty to an unwholesome excess. In the first place, much of your most valuable reading bears on subjects in the study of which it is your duty to compare and criticise the thoughts of the great men of the past.

In the second place, your life has probably less scope for social action than it had. Free from the immediate attraction of home ties, and the social pressure of neighbourly interests; or else (if you have come from any of the great public boarding-schools) free from the responsibilities and duties which were familiar to many of you as prefects or monitors; leading comparatively isolated and independent lives; cut off by your very duty from much action, and bound to devote the next three or four years of your life to self-culture—you ought to be on your guard lest you lose somewhat (at least for a time) by being temporarily withdrawn from many of those natural influences which seem intended by God to mould our minds into conformity with His truth.

Before speaking of the one main safeguard against the critical spirit, I would briefly mention two or three minor remedies, which some may find very useful during this period of probation; not forgetting, of course, that different remedies may suit different natures. Action of almost any unselfish and beneficent kind is likely to be of some use, lifting one, though for a short time, out of the region of books and theories. I have heard some men (and those of no mean ability) say that teaching in a Sunday-school, though it were but for an hour a week, helped to dissipate many theological spectres, which looked formidable in the study, but vanished somehow when brought to the test of teaching. Another remedy (which may

apply to all) is the avoidance of luxury. A plain and simple way of living has a direct influence in increasing fellow-feeling and sympathy with others. Some of you, perhaps, may have good reasons at home for denying yourselves up here. If you have, believe me, when you leave Oxford, you will not only look back upon such self-denial as one of the best and purest of your recollections, but you will also find that it has been a powerful agent in guiding you toward the highest truth. Even to others who may have no such cogent causes for rigorous economy, permit me to suggest that, although a man is by no means bound to make himself uncomfortable simply for the sake of ascertaining how well he can bear discomfort, yet it is not amiss that, when you look round your college rooms, you should be sometimes reminded of this or that which you would like to purchase, but will not, because the money may be better spent. To dwell on friendship as a safeguard against the critical spirit would be to trespass on the common-places of the ancients: and therefore with one brief word of protest that in these busy days friendship ought not to be extinguished by width of acquaintance, I will add but one other remedy, I mean the reading and re-reading of some few of the best and noblest books—a habit morally, and not merely intellectually useful. For such reading breeds something better than critical appreciation; imbuing the reader with the spirit of the author, and sowing seeds that will germinate

and fructify because they fall upon the deep soil of reverence and faith.

Let this suffice for the minor safeguards against the critical spirit. But now to speak both of the greatest danger to be apprehended from it, and at the same time of the greatest safeguard against it. The greatest safeguard seems to me to be the worship of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of man, and the greatest danger seems to be the habit of judging or criticising the Son of man ; and the rest of this discourse will be devoted to the maintenance of this proposition, that we cannot hope to understand the life and work of Jesus Christ if we approach it in the attitude of a judge or critic.

Carefully distinguish, however, between two things essentially different ; between judging the historical accuracy of narratives, or the genuineness or date of documents, and judging a soul, a character. To the former task, to the criticism of the text of the Scriptures, we ought to bring a judicial spirit, seeking only the truth ; but to appreciation of a character we must bring something more than the cool dispassionateness of a judge. Even to understand an ordinary human being some degree of sympathy is necessary. Now the most sceptical critic of the New Testament ought to recognise, as a historical fact, beneath those early traditions which relate the history of the great revolution of the world, an Originator of that Revolution, whose character and teaching ought to seem, even to sceptics, the most

stupendous fact in human history. If, therefore, it be true that even an ordinary selfish narrow human creature cannot be rightly estimated by any critic who has not the power to discern *the soul of goodness in things evil*, and who does not bring something of pitying sympathy to the task of criticism; if it be also still further true of any great and good man that he cannot be understood unless he is approached with something of admiration and reverence and trust; how much more must it be true that we cannot hope, even in the slightest degree, to apprehend the human nature of Jesus of Nazareth, as long as we bring to the study nothing but the faculties of an acute critic. We are not to judge Him, but to love; or rather, we are first to love, that we may afterwards judge of Him aright.

But it may be urged that our knowledge of the words and deeds, and hence of the character of Christ, is derived from documents which, as we have admitted, must be criticised, and which, if discredited by criticism, may efface, together with themselves, that very Character upon which our faith and hopes are based. It is this fear which seems at this moment, more than any other evil influence, to paralyse Christian activity. To meet it I would suggest the following considerations: 1st, That our knowledge of Christ depends not only on the books of the New Testament, but also on a fact by all acknowledged, I mean that great Revolution commonly called Christianity, which

was and is one of the most indisputable facts in the history of the world : 2nd, No satisfactory or scientific account of that Revolution has been given, or can be given, which ignores the Originator of it : 3rd, It is absolutely incredible that the Originator of so vast and so complete a Revolution should have achieved his success by accidents, delusions, or impostures : 4th, It is credible and probable *à priori* that He succeeded, in virtue of a singular intuition into the tendencies of things, and a profound sympathy with the aspirations and degradations of mankind : 5th, The general consent of our Gospel narrative exhibits to us just such a character as this, one endowed with a singular intuition into the tendencies of things (which we better call the will of God), with singular power of attracting, uplifting, and strengthening, the aspirations of men (which we call faith): and lastly, with a singular power of sympathising with and destroying by His sympathy, the degradations of mankind (which we call sins). This character, for those who accept it as a historical fact, explains the phenomena of Christianity; but those who reject it as fabulous impose upon themselves the necessity of believing one of the most incredible and monstrous of miracles. For since a fable must have sprung from some inventor or inventors, it follows that those who reject Christ's personal character as fictitious must suppose that in the days of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, Annas and Caiaphas being

the high priests, and the Pharisees being the spiritual directors of Israel, there arose a sect of Galilean peasants who, under stress of circumstances—some strong spiritual excitement arising from no particular cause—succeeded in consciously or unconsciously inventing some myth or fable which was afterwards developed into the character of Christ. Surely he must be a very credulous man who can believe so monstrous a miracle as this.

Having, therefore, in the human nature and the human character of Christ, and in the history of His influence upon the world after as well as before His death, a veritable rock whereon to base our faith, we need not fear to criticise the Scriptures freely, while we worship and fear to criticise Christ. Why are we so tremulous because here and there in the pages of the New Testament there are not only various readings but also occasionally interpolations, some of which are already recognised by all scholars, and more of which may possibly be recognised hereafter? Consider the effect of the supposed literal inspiration of the Koran on the followers of Mohammed, or consider the effect of the same belief, applied to the Bible, upon some Christians who have perverted the books of the Scriptures into one uniformly and literally inspired oracle, and you will then perceive that the apparent imperfections of the Bible have really been the providential means of rescuing Christendom from a gross idolatry.

But there is a prejudice in some minds that if the Scriptures are, in any high sense, the Word of God, then they must be wholly and exactly and even literally accurate. But where in God's world do we find a basis for such a notion? Ought we not rather to say, with Origen, that if the Gospels proceed from God, and if the world proceeds from God, then in the Gospels we may expect to find the same phenomena as meet us in the world? And if we turn from the search after truth in the Bible to the search after truth in the world, what meets us there? Surely, whether we look at the life of the individual in its passage from childhood to old age, or at the lives of states, or at the growth of scientific knowledge, or at the development of Christianity itself, nothing seems more ordinary than that eternal verity should be continually involved as it were in some transitory shape which, like a shell, obscures and protects the ripening fruit of truth. Applying, therefore, this analogy to the Gospels, let us welcome all honest, keen, and thorough criticism of such things as are fit to be criticised, believing that criticism of this kind is an appointed means for removing, in God's good time, all such integuments as may obscure the eternal truths of God: but when we approach the Son of man let us cast away the spirit of criticism and take up faith and reverence.

I speak rather of the worship of Christ as the Son of man than of Christ as the Son of God, not of course because Christ is not to be worshipped as

the Son of God and as very God of very God, but because it seems to be God's prescribed lesson that (at all events in the generation that is to come) we are to ascend to the worship of Christ as God through the worship of Christ as man. Let us endeavour to trace the ascent of such a worship; but first a word as to the other method—the method of descent.

For our ordinary course in religious teaching is, as you all know, entirely different from the ascending method. We begin, even in our earliest childhood, with the conception of Christ as God, and many children are so brought up as hardly to be aware that Christ was very man as well as very God. But is the result of our system quite satisfactory? Is it not the fact that many, and these not children but men, calling themselves and being in a certain sense Christians, have passed through life worshipping Christ as God, but have never even for an instant in their whole lives realised the fact that He really lived, pitied, sorrowed, was tempted—much less that (in the words of the authors of the Gospel of St. Luke and the Epistle of the Hebrews) He *grew in wisdom* as well as in stature, and *learned obedience from the things that He suffered*? That He had the body of a man all, of course, believe; but how many believe, at least in their hearts as well as with their lips, that He was perfect man, endowed with human motives as well as with human flesh? I know one who has said that he never had any difficulty in believing Christ to be God, but that for the first

twenty years of his life he could never succeed in so far undoing the results of early associations as to realise that He was also very man. And yet from the want of such a realisation what deplorable consequences follow! For if Christ be not a man indeed, but only the semblance of a man, then all the life and loyalty pass at once out of our religion: His love becomes condescension: His pity a mere amiable appearance: His life a chaos: His death a portent: and He Himself a mysterious amalgam. Is this danger of worshipping a non-human Christ altogether beyond our own experience? Are there not some of us even here who might confess, if we would search our hearts, that we have been more touched by the story of the death of Socrates, more thrilled by the familiar and fictitious miseries of King Lear, than by the narrative of the sorrows of Jesus of Nazareth? And why? Why but because our hearts have not yet realised that He, being man, endured for us the mental and spiritual sufferings of humanity, as well as the mere bodily agonies of human flesh? Therefore I conclude, in the first place, that our present worship of Christ often fails to appreciate His human nature, and that there is a danger in worshipping Him as Son of God before we have learned to worship Him as Son of man.

This conclusion is confirmed by our knowledge of the manner in which Christ Himself trained His disciples to worship Him. Carry yourselves back in imagination to the central moment of Christ's

work on earth, the crisis in the history of the world, the moment in which the Universal Church was founded in heaven simultaneously with the confession of faith by St. Peter upon earth. On that day Christ was an exile. But yesterday He had been hailed as Messiah by the acclamations of His countrymen; the patriots of Galilee had sought to crown Him as their king; even the Pharisees had not so very long ago been disposed to welcome Him as a possible pillar of the Law. Partly by the power of His presence, partly by His mighty works of healing, partly owing to the general expectation of a deliverance, He had mounted at once into the recognised position of a prophet, if not the Deliverer of Israel. But now all was changed. The official homage which His countrymen had paid to Him as the Messiah, and the political homage which was tendered to Him by the Galileans, He rated as nothing worth and had deliberately cast aside; the professional overtures of the Pharisees He had even more abruptly rejected; the homage that came to Him from all quarters as being a worker of miracles came to Him often against His will. He would not attempt to work such miracles as they desired, though in return for them the united nation would have given Him their allegiance: such signs as He did work He often worked in secret. He would not suffer Himself to be made a king. Not as a King, nor as a Conqueror, nor as a Worker of wonders, but as a Son of man, as a Man of sorrows and

acquainted with griefs, He lived and moved among His disciples, stripping as it were from their conception of Himself everything official and adventitious, and leading them to love Him and worship Him only for Himself and in Himself—as Man, simply as the Son of man.

But when the disciples were now duly prepared, and the pre-ordained hour was come for founding the Universal Church, then it came to pass that Jesus led the disciples away from the borders of Galilee into the parts round about Cæsarea: and there, in a heathen land, hard by the cave of Pan, gazing on the temple of Cæsar Augustus, with everything around Him to discourage and to repress His followers, and with nothing but Himself to give them confidence, He, an outcast, the rejected of Israel, began to question His disciples, calling Himself not Son of God, nor Christ, nor Messiah, but only Son of man, and saying, *Whom say ye that I, the Son of man, am?*

Then, when the disciples searched their hearts to consider what answer they might truly make, they perceived that, though Jesus of Nazareth would not be the King of the Galileans, though He would work no sign for them in heaven, though He seemed to break the Sabbath, though He were rejected by all Israel, yea, even by those that sat in Moses' seat, yet, for all that, He had become unto them as the very breath of their lives, and without Him they were not able to live; so that their hearts replied to Him in the words of the

Psalmist, *Whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that we desire in comparison of thee.* Thus, in that instant, the dormant germ of faith which had been lying undeveloped in the hearts of men since man was first created, the faith or hope that, after all, and in spite of all appearance to the contrary, Right is Might, and is Lord of the world—this faith, I say, quickened by the life and teaching and presence of Jesus of Nazareth, sprang up in the hearts of the disciples into a new and fruitful life, taking a new and indestructible shape in the confession of St. Peter, the spokesman of the disciples, that the righteous Son of man was also the mighty Son of God. Thus were the disciples led through the worship of the Son of man to the worship of the Son of God—and this by the Teacher of teachers, by Jesus of Nazareth Himself.

May it not be that in the history of the Church after the Apostolic times some similar process is to be traced whereby Christ is detaching us from merely official worship and leading us to adore not His office but Himself? In the early and middle ages of the Church all or almost all worshipped Jesus as the Lord; but did they not unduly ignore His human nature? If they worshipped Him at all as human, it was as the little child in the arms of the Virgin Mother; so that, as an inevitable consequence, much of the worship was diverted to the Mother from the Son. Otherwise they worshipped Him not as the Man of spiritual sorrows, acquainted with the griefs and sins of men, but as

the worker of wonders on earth, or the inexplicable Sufferer on the cross, or the future Judge from heaven. Even in the Reformed Church, love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus were too often lost in the adoration of His vicarious sacrifice, and He was regarded as naught but the centre of a great system of theology.

It need not be said that there were exceptions to this rule, saintly souls in every age whom Christ drew towards Himself with a personal and passionate faith which may well put most modern faith to shame. But in the great masses of men faith was of a coarser nature, much like the faith of the multitudes who hailed Jesus as Messiah on His first appearance in Galilee. Perhaps this was necessary. Whenever truth is cast into the hearts of men, it is (perhaps it must be) at once encased in a crust of illusion. So when the incarnate Truth appeared in Galilee, the eternal and vital faith in a Deliverer was at once encrusted in a transitory official shape, attributing to the Deliverer certain local, temporary, and material attributes. This opinion was shared by the Apostles themselves. It was not a delusion: it was an illusion, that is to say, a natural integument of truth, without which the truth itself might perhaps have found no entrance into any Jewish heart. Similarly, in the early ages of the Christian Church, when the first impulse of the constraining personal love of Christ had passed away, an illusory belief in the speedy coming of Christ as a

visible Judge took possession of the hearts of His followers. But for the strengthening protection of that illusion (which contains the eternal truth that Christ is judging and shall finally judge the world) Christianity might not perhaps have outlasted the storms of persecution. But when its purpose was served it passed away to make way for other illusions, each destined to remain only so long as it might be needed to preserve some truth which might otherwise have perished.

There are signs that now, in this generation, we in England are approaching a crisis when we may expect some new manifestation of Christ, and consequently also the disappearance of some old illusion. For Christ is no longer worshipped in this country with an unanimous, scarcely even with a general, worship. As He was rejected in old times by the scribes and students of the Law of Moses, so is He rejected in these days by a certain section of the students of the laws of Nature, and on somewhat similar grounds.

He destroyeth the Law of Moses, and is not needful for the attainment of righteousness, said the Scribes and Pharisees. *He interferes with our system. He is not necessary for the attainment of scientific truth. His existence is contrary to the laws of Nature*, cry the Scribes of modern times. Both charges strictly parallel, and equally false. Again, as He was rejected in former times by the multitude of His countrymen and by the Galilean patriots, so He is rejected at this present time by

multitudes of the poor, and by some of the educated and philanthropic. *Why doth He not free John the Baptist? why doth He not cast out the Romans?* cried the one. *Why does He not destroy poverty and disease?* ask the other. *Why does He suffer His followers to become a prey to schism, to discord, and to war?* Others, again, a very numerous class, who still worship Him in name, stumbling as men stumbled in the days of old because Christ would work no sign in heaven, ask tremulously, *Why has He not given us, as a secure basis for our faith, an unanimous and world-wide Church?* Others, again, *Why have we not the unerring oracle of a literally inspired book to save us from that destruction of our faith which to-morrow's criticism may possibly bring forth?* Thus, from various causes, all who worship Christ, not with their combined faculties but with the brain alone; all those who worship Him not for Himself but for what they may get from Him; all those of us who worship Him, not on the testimony of His own life and works but simply on the authority of a Church, or the authority of a book—all these seem to be parting from Christ: and Christ seems to be leaving us, and casting behind Him all our official worship, and going away from us into the wilderness alone.

Brethren, let us pray that we may have grace to follow our Master thither; and gathering around Him there, casting aside the critical spirit, let us be content to sit a while patiently at His feet, gazing up in reverence at His face, if perchance

through faith and trust we may attain to some apprehension of His nature; and there, in the wilderness, if need be, let us wait till the grace of God shall enable us to make answer to that question which it is the supreme object of our lives to answer aright, *Whom say ye that I, the Son of man, am?*

Take with you into the wilderness of probation all aids and appliances to faith: The Bible first; then prayer, prayer patient and regular in spite of apparent failure, prayer that shall knock successfully in the end at the unyielding doors of your own stubborn and faithless heart; take with you thoughts of home and of home life; and, as the years roll on, take, as your hearts will bid you, the prayerful memory of the blessed dead; take a spirit of reverence and humility, and a resolute determination not to dislocate your life by giving up the use of public worship, but to be patient and constant amid doubts, suspending your judgment, and waiting a while until age and experience may help you to ascertain whether new life may not be breathed into the old forms and phrases. Take also, if you will, commentaries and concordances and all that is included in our apparatus criticus; but in the study of the ideal Character of Man leave some place for Wordsworth and Shakespeare, whom God has surely not given to English students without a Divine purpose in the gift. Take with you a mind framed to judge and to discern things true from false; but take also a body toned

and attuned for noble thoughts by pure habits and by manly exercises; and lastly, take an earnest and laborious life, not only imbued with noble hopes of future well-doing, but, if possible, tinged also with some present habits of unselfish action.

If you will do this there need be no fear for the ultimate result. The Son of man, through whom you strive to contemplate all things in heaven and earth, shall sanctify all influences for your good; the stars in their courses shall fight for you. In spite of seeming retrogressions, Christ shall guide you still onward and upward; and each year, as it develops in you the faculties of manhood, shall develop in you also His growing presence. Raised above all fears, doubts, and misgivings as to the final triumph of the Supreme Good, you shall receive and retain the conviction of St. Peter daily deepened in your heart, that there is none in heaven but Christ and the Father whom He hath revealed, and none on earth whom you may desire in comparison with Christ. Then, when you worship Christ as one with God, you will not be timidly using an old form of words which for old associations' sake you would not willingly give up, but you will be expressing a faith which will have become a part of your very being, that Jesus of Nazareth sums up in Himself, and verily is, the Eternal Word of God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords: and that, as He hath already subjected death to His own glory, enthroning

Himself by means of death in the hearts and affections of mankind, so shall He also, in the far-off future, make sin itself and every other evil subservient to His eternal purposes, to the end that, rising upon the altar-steps of this mysterious world, through illusion, through pain, through corruption, through death, and through sin, the imperfect children of men may ascend at last to the perfection of the Father in heaven.

THE WORD NOT YET MADE FLESH.

In the beginning was the Word . . . all things were made by Him.—ST. JOHN I. 1, 3.

WE believe that the world was made by the Eternal Word for the hallowing of God's name. But if this be so, then the more we learn about the history of the world and all things therein, the more we are learning about the instruments framed by the Word of God to mould the minds of men for the righteous worship of Him. When, therefore, historians reveal to us new truths about the rise and fall of nations, or physiologists about the origin of the operations of the brain and nerves, or geologists about the formation of the strata of the earth, or astronomers about the motions and origins of the heavenly bodies, or dramatists about the potent effects of human passions shaping character for good or ill, or the poets of nature about the subtle influence of sunset and sunrise, clouds and mountains and lakes in developing unnamed and unnameable aspirations—in all these cases we are learning some-

thing more about the operations of the Eternal Word guiding us towards worship. Consciously or unconsciously, all these, and many other workers, are leading us to a better apprehension of the Word of God, and therefore to a higher worship of Christ, who is the Eternal Word made flesh.

In different ages of the Church different bases for faith in Christ have commended themselves to men, some of which are now withdrawn from us. For example, the civilised world being now imbued with the Spirit of Christ, we have no longer the striking testimony to His power once supplied by the contrast between Christianity and Paganism. Nor have we any longer the support of the apparent unanimity of the visible Church in all points of ritual and doctrine. But to compensate for these and other seeming losses we have two or three manifest gains: first, the testimony of I know not how many centuries bearing witness to the work of the Eternal Word before the Word was made flesh; secondly, the witness of eighteen centuries, after the Word was made flesh, attesting the power of His influence and the truth of His doctrine; thirdly, a recently increasing appreciation of the divineness of Christ's human nature, or the Word made flesh. The history of the world divided into these three sections may be compared to a trilogy of which till very lately only the two last dramas had been discovered, and the drift of the whole had

been consequently obscured. But now, page after page of the introductory drama being brought to light, the two latter dramas are made more intelligible, and the meaning of the Author more apparent.

It is to the first drama in this sublime trilogy that I desire to call your attention to-day—to the connecting thread of purpose and method traceable in the creation and development of that which St. Paul calls “The first Adam.” On another occasion, if opportunity should allow, it might be possible to trace the same purpose and the same method in the manifestation of the “Second Adam,” that is, in the Incarnation; and lastly, in the conformation of the first Adam to the Second, that is, in the history of the Church of Christ. The method, rather than the purpose, will engage our attention—a method in which progress and development will be found effected by natural laws and quiet, unobtrusive processes; and evil, continually obtruding and developing itself, is not eradicated, but subordinated to the purposes of good. Evil, as well as good, is developed in each stage of the progressive world—evil, which our precipitate fancies would lead us to destroy in the germ; but the divine method has ever been the same, *Let both grow together till the harvest.*

The best illustration of the subordination of evil to good may perhaps be found in the first scene of the drama of creation, as we contemplate

the rudiments of the coalescing earth and the great law which regulates its growth. The history of every single particle of matter is a kind of type and prophecy of the history of each human soul and of the whole human race. Consider such a particle. It had a motion of its own (we know not whence); its desire, let us call it, which impelled it into space. But it was arrested in its course by attraction to a powerful centre of force. If either of these two original forces had been absent the result would have been no world. Take away the motion of desire, and the particle would have been absorbed into the attracting centre; take away the central attraction, and desire would have hurried the particle into the barren void. But, as the result of these two simultaneous forces, the particle moves in the harmonious orbit of life. Moreover, by the same law by which each particle is attracted to the common and parental centre, by that same law each is attracted to each, brother to brother. Thus the attracting law of fatherhood, so to speak, is really but another form of the social law of brotherhood.

Let us not take this material law, ordained by the Word of God, for more than a mere illustration of His corresponding law in the immaterial world, whereby the love of the brother and love of the Father are closely connected. Yet even of such illustrations some may be inclined to say with a great man (substituting *God* for *Nature*),

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These are not only similitudes, as men of narrow observation may conceive them to be, but the same footsteps of God, treading or printing upon several subjects or matters.

Let us imagine ourselves fresh from the spectacle of a chaos converted to order by a simple law of motion, present as spectators of the cooling globe, while it rolls round the sun, tenantless as yet, half in light but half in darkness; and the question is put to us, *What is the governing force of this world?* Knowing nothing of what is to come, and looking only to the sublime victory of order over disorder, our reply at this stage might perhaps be no more than this, *The governing power of the world is a law of motion.*

But now life appears, life at first of a low order, the life of the vegetable; growth rather than life: nevertheless a vast stride upwards. But side by side with growth, or the germ of life, appears its shadow, decay, or the germ of death. Moreover, along with growth there appears a new kind of conflict or struggle, not like that struggle between two forces for the direction of the particle (a struggle which we saw resolving itself at once into a peaceable compromise), but a destructive and internecine struggle for existence in which some living things choke and exterminate others. A problem ancient as thought, and as insoluble as ancient—the problem of waste and death. Yet here, even from the beginning, we see the first dim suggestion of that incisive solution of the knot

which was afterwards to be made prominent in the death of the highest Life ; for from the decay and death of one, we behold the fertilised earth giving birth and life to others.

Let us imagine ourselves again upon the surface of the earth, wondering spectators of the fresh-born kingdom of vegetable life, ignorant as yet of decay, and accepting the spectacle of the first decaying thing as the manifestation of a new power in the world. What a shock should we have felt when the newly-created living creature faded and withered and perished before our eyes ! That first death would have darkened our vision of the governing force of earth, till from the ground on which we are gazing, mourning at the apparent triumph of disorder and destruction, and all unaware of the latent seed deposited by the parent plant, there springs up the new living creature, type of a triumphant resurrection. Moreover, we discern that the struggle for existence in the vegetable world, wherein so many are called and so few chosen, helps on the progress of those that are to come after, by leaving the fittest to survive, and by thus raising the level of life. Thus are our hearts inspired with confidence to declare *The governing force of the world is after all not disorder, but order ; not death, but life.*

As growth brought with it the shadow of decay, so the advent of a brighter life of action brings with it the shadow of a darker death of suffering ; and pleasure brings with it inseparable pain.

Myriads of moving things are seen rejoicing in existence, but struggling to exist; leading lives diversified with pain and pleasure, but always ending in pain. Unquestionably the problem presented by the death of the first breathing thing must have been far more terrible and perplexing to the imaginary spectator than the spectacle of the mere decay of any inanimate object. Think even of the mere natural death of any of the higher animals, for the first time contemplated. Yonder self-moving machine, how wonderfully made! How admirably adapted for the plains or forests wherein it seeks its sustenance! What grace in all its movements! What a light of life in its eyes! How great its enjoyment in mere untroubled existence! But see: it falters, stumbles, and falls, not to rise up again; the windows of light are darkened in it; the quiet grace of its calm repose and the beauty of its motion, are replaced by unsightly gaspings and convulsions, and after a few distorting struggles the exquisitely constructed machine is shattered for ever. How much more terrible still when some stronger life swoops down upon the weaker, and, in spite of vain resistance, cries, and agonies, hurries the doomed thing away to its final and inevitable pain! Must not such a spectacle have led the imaginary spectator in the primæval world to cry aloud in despair, *Truly death and destruction are the governing forces of the world?*

At this stage, therefore, as counterpoises to the

increased power of death, we see for the first time introduced among the higher animals a new and unheard-of force. It is a kind of attraction, comparable to the attraction between the magnet and the iron; only it seems not to be a mere law of motion, nor any law of inert matter, but to be found most prominent where the animal differs most from the vegetable. Instead of the mere contiguity of the seedling to the mother plant, the contact of nutrition between offspring and parent in certain higher races has issued in a maternal thrill of something which, in its permanent shape, we call instinctive love. But for this new force of protective love the rising generations of the higher races could not be sustained. There is also the lower instinct of generative love by which the tribes of the waters as well as those of earth and air are influenced. To these affections all animate things, even the most savage, are subjected; and thus, though faintly as yet, above the voices of death and destruction, other voices are making themselves heard.

Moreover, as though to supplement the new power, and to counterpoise brute strength, another power is being quietly introduced. How many of us have admired, with some sense of worship, the beauty that meets us everywhere in Nature—the beauty of the flowers of the field, beauty in bird and beast, and the still higher beauty of the indescribable melodies with which our English birds gladden our hearts in spring-time—how many of

us in our boyhood noted all these things, and knew not that these delights had been wrought out for us by the Eternal Word through natural and quiet processes of countless generations! Yet so it has been. Beauty, whether of fragrance, or form, or colour, or sound, has been, though all unnoted by men, an attracting power for the lower creatures since the world was created, attracting the insects to this flower and not to that, fertilising the more beautiful, repressing the less beautiful, and thus adorning the fields with a brightness which increases as the ages roll on. In the same way, in the animal world, not mere strength, but beauty in song, or shape, or colour, attracting all living things together, has perpetuated the more beautiful and repressed the less, so that at this day we may say that each flash of the breast of the humming-bird, every speck in the wing of the butterfly, every note of the nightingale, comes to us through countless ages, elaborated in the processes of nature by the Eternal Word.

Against the increased power of death we see, therefore, the new power of instinctive love, and that highest kind of order which we call beauty, allying themselves with life. And beside these helps, we have the same aid which science gave us in contemplating vegetable decay. Here, as there, struggle produces fitness, and death is seen to be the basis of a higher life. Even in its most vast and fearful aspect, death dooming to destruction whole races at a blow, whether in the animal or in

the vegetable world, is seen to be working no wanton waste, but to be building up, stratum above stratum, that surface which is to be the home of the higher race that is yet to come.

With these allies and aids to help us, we are able to confront primæval death and to say, Between life and death in themselves we find it hard to pronounce which is the more powerful ; but we see coming into the world two new attracting forces—love and beauty ; and both of these seem to tend, not towards disorder but to order, not to the encouragement of brute destructive strength, but to the development of a higher life. These two new powers seem to turn the scale of life as against death ; and perchance life, with its two allied forces, love and beauty, are the governing powers of the world.

Passing over a great gulf in the progress of creation we come now to man, gifted with attention, memory, and forethought. The memory of past kindnesses develops the former instinctive love into a deliberate and permanent affection. And when we view the ideal father in the ideal family, then we might well deem that wheresoever two or three have thus been gathered together by the Eternal Word, there, more than elsewhere, has the Eternal Word been ; and fatherhood and brotherhood might seem to be entitled to be called the governing forces of the world. But we are far off at present from the ideal man, far back in the remotest ages contemplating man in the condition

of a savage. And, contemplated thus, what a fall does man exhibit! Attention and memory, these are bright gifts. Yes, but what dark curses inseparably attend them! Does not the same memory which develops love also develop hate? By the great gift of language men are united into communities and become aware of the utility of law, and learn to love the rewards and praises of obedience and to shrink from the punishment and dispraise of disobedience, and dimly to feel that, apart from all reward or punishment, the law is to be obeyed; thus, from the sense of utility, being led by the Eternal Word to feel their way toward the sense of righteousness. But the fall seems in proportion to the rise. For with the painful privilege of obeying law comes the strong temptation to disobey; and the promised birth of righteousness is counterbalanced by the threatened advent of a new enemy, as yet unknown, an enemy more terrible even than death.

Thus each bright gift brings its dark shadow; and as in the transition from vegetable to animal life, so now again in the transition from rational to irrational life, the shadow seems at first to gain the victory over the light. Hope, for example, brings with it its shadow, fear; and fear seems at first stronger than hope. For who could assert that hope and fear were fairly matched as long as hope could look forward to nothing beyond the grave, while fear beheld, ever at hand, inevitable death? Memory also brought, as we have seen, hate as well

as love ; and it brought another seeming evil peculiar to men. The herd and the flock can forget their dying companion even while the breath is passing from its body ; there is reserved for men the privilege of recollecting, long after death, the not-returning dead.

It is the destiny of this planetary home of ours to be half in darkness, but always half in light. Is it possible that it should be the destiny of man himself that darkness should overspread the larger portion of his life ? Could that seem right ?

No, it could not seem right. And therefore Hope arises to do battle against Death, and to discern, beyond the grave, visions of blessing for the dead, happy islands of peace, or Elysian meadows, or far-off hunting-fields where the chase shall never cease. On the side of Hope there range themselves strange allies, who would have seemed more suitably ranked on the side of death. Night and Sleep stretch out their hands to mould the mind of man for the contemplation of an invisible world, unapproachable by death. Strange, that Sleep, the very twin brother of Death, should thus be enforced to take up arms against it ! Strange, that darkness (of all natural agencies) should be found preparing the way for the discernment of an inextinguishable light !

Darkness ! What a waste it seems, for all things, in proportion to their activity ! Sleep, too ! how ignoble and base a condescension that such a piece of work as man should require for the mere

readjustment of his complex machinery a period of inactive torpor, almost equal in length to one half the time devoted to action! But as darkness covers the paths of earth, the streams, and forests, and yet leaves the nightly wanderer none the less certain that paths, streams, and forests are still there and will re-appear with the morrow's light; and as, with contrary effect, when the veil of day is withdrawn from the stars, the night restores them to the eye in their wonted splendour, so by slow degrees the minds of men are led through the suggestion of darkness to meditate and rest, first on things that are not seen, and then on things that cannot be seen. The horizon of hope being thus enlarged by darkness, sleep steps in to people the new world. The dreams of night presenting the vision of some dead chief or father, appearing in his armour even as he lived, startle the sleeper from his slumbers to grasp at the fleeting apparition, and to find that it evades him like a shadow, and vanishes like a breath into the thin air. None the less, the whole tribe is summoned on the morrow to learn that the Breath or Spirit or Shade of the departed chief still lives, demanding food or worship, and that he has powers for good or evil in a world beyond the grave.

Here, if not before, comes into the world the first germ of the natural religion of humanity: I mean the religion that enjoins the worship of a being endowed with human attributes. Before, perhaps, the personification had been almost

unconscious, when homage had been paid to the potent agencies of nature—the sun, the sky, the fire and the water, or to other baser objects of adoration. But now, behind all these visible objects, there is thrown by the imagination the presence of an invisible personality. If the great Chief has a breath or spirit, not subject to change, and working weal or woe for those that honour or dishonour him, how much more must this be true of the other objects of adoration, the great Gods of Nature! Now, therefore, all nature is personified, and begins to possess a will, the will of the united Gods, or perchance of the Father of them all. This will, though not written in stone or brass, is above all written laws of men. To conform oneself to this highest unwritten Law is reverence, virtue, righteousness. A great stride upwards, surely, this! But alas, the ascent is matched by an equal descent. For with the discovery of righteousness comes the discovery of its shadow, unrighteousness; to disobey the laws of men—that had been only a crime; but now, as man rises higher, to the contemplation of a higher than human law, he is found capable of a darker disobedience and a deeper fall; for the new disobedience is sin.

When these two spectres—sin and the fear of death—had first obtruded themselves upon the mind, would it not have seemed to us—would-be creators and critics of the world—a fitting work for a beneficent governor of all things to crush them upon the threshold? But that has not been the

method of the Eternal Word. Death is to be utilised, sin to be subordinated ; but, first of all, each must run its course. Death must manifest all its terrors, and sin must be made *exceeding sinful*.

Now, therefore, begins the age of ancient civilisation, of which one object was to make men consciously miserable, that they might be delivered from their misery. As in the lower world of irrational creatures, so here, the races of men battle and struggle together for existence or supremacy ; and the supremacy of the fittest brings prominently forward different powers ; first force, then cunning, then the power of multitude, skill, orderly union, patriotism, reverence for law and order. During the excitement of the struggle, the fear of death was forgotten, and sin scarcely recognised. Leonidas breakfasts cheerfully at Thermopylae ready to dine in Hades : it is *sweet and honourable to die for one's country*. Only in one little province of Syria is a voice heard crying to the governing Power of the world for deliverance from the fear of death. *My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death has fallen upon me*. Only in the same despised corner of the earth is there heard the strange prayer, *Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit ; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise*. But that was the solitary cry of Israel. Rome and Greece, in the freshness

of their maturity, knew not *the fear of death*, nor the need of *a contrite heart*.

Yet all the while, even in Greece and Rome, the two spectres were only dormant, not driven out. Therefore at last, when the empire of Rome had welded the civilised world into one great society, the nations sat down at leisure for the first time to think and to be miserable, face to face with death and sin. A law-abiding, peace-loving spirit pervaded the world, and the path was clear for the combined action of all civilised nations; but the motive for action seemed to have disappeared. Women of all classes, and all the slaves and poor, are found deserting the old national religions, and resorting to novel rites and strange expiations, if perchance they may discharge their minds of this new uneasy feeling called in Judæa sin. Jugglers, travelling priests, and astrologers make profit of the universal yearning for one glimpse into the secrets of the after world. If it was impossible to secure happiness after death, yet to exist, or at least to be remembered, began now commonly to seem one of the most precious of treasures; and many an inscription still records for us how Tullius or Tullia builds a tomb for himself or herself while living, and leaves an estate to the intent that twice a year, for all time, his freedmen, and their descendants for ever, may sprinkle upon his tomb spring violets or summer roses, and feast together around his sepulchre. Even the poor slave, whose body is thrown by a cruel master to the dogs and crows,

has a provision made for his hard case by his humble burial-club, enacting that in such a case he shall at least receive *an imaginary funeral*.

Deep down beneath the literary froth of a little noisy bubbling scepticism, the thoughts of the masses of men were more than ever given to religion, turning, now hither now thither, to every god and goddess of the Pantheon for deliverance from their intolerable burdens. But gods and goddesses were dumb. Crowded into cities, or toiling as slaves in gangs upon the lands of a master, the poor and miserable who made up the majority of the empire felt that the old glory had departed for ever from the great gods of Nature: living at a time when heroism was extinct, they found the worship of the ancient heroes no longer helpful. The West turned to the East for deliverance; but Isis and Serapis, imported into Rome, gave no permanent aid. Turning from the blank heaven to earth, men saw there no God more real and powerful than the being who sat upon the one remaining throne, whose will was law throughout the empire, the Master of many legions, whose existence was the peace of the world: and the worship of a Tiberius or a Caligula became popular and natural and insuppressible; and Nero found worshippers after his death.

Yet there was still the old question obtruded by the inopportune and ever premature Spectre, which not even an emperor could answer—What is there after death? *As long as I live will I hang lamps*

around thy tomb, says the inscription of a faithful freedman engraved on the master's tombstone : *after death—I know not*. That plaintive utterance expresses the universal cry of the suffering and toiling classes of the empire. *After death we know not*. It was with them as with Hamlet : the *time* was *out of joint*, and the fear of death *puzzled the will* and diverted the ancient *currents of enterprise*. To whom should be assigned, cries the imperial poet, the task of propping the falling empire and of expiating its guilt ? The poet who put that question had a courtly answer of his own : he looks to the Julian laws for the reformation of the race, and sees the Saviour in Augustus. But if to our imaginary spectator of the changing world this same question had been addressed a few years afterwards, say in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, he would have been prompted, I think, to an altogether different answer, something after this fashion : Unless men can be delivered from the bondage of death and sin, the development of the civilised world is at an end : whatsoever power therefore shall be able to effect this deliverance, that power will be at one with the governing Power of the world, continuing the work that has been wrought from the beginning.

We might have added, having regard to the past history of the world, that such a deliverance would probably be achieved, if ever, not by a great convulsion or instantaneous revolution, but by quiet means and inobtrusive processes ; not by a

recurrence to force, but by appeal to peaceful powers; not by imposing an external law, but by diffusing an internal spirit; not by setting aside all human institutions and habits, but by regenerating them all, and most of all, the institution of the family and the habitual sense of fatherhood. That such a deliverance should ever be effected by a single human being would perhaps have seemed to us impossible: but if it had been predicted to us that assuredly one Man would accomplish this great task, revivifying the sense of fatherhood, destroying the weight of sin, and blunting the sting of death, and that He would do all this by calling mankind to come to Himself, to take His yoke upon them, and to accept Him as the source of forgiveness and as the sustenance of their higher life, then we should have unhesitatingly replied that such a human Being must be, though human, yet in some sense divine, and at one with the governing Power of the world. What else we should believe about Him belongs to the second drama of the trilogy, and we are at present witnessing only the first drama, the Work of the Word not yet made flesh.

THE WORD MADE FLESH.

The Word was made flesh.—ST. JOHN I. 14.

WE have spoken of the history of the world before the coming of Christ as being a kind of ascent of worship. Now we are to speak of the coming of Christ as introducing the highest worship of all ; a worship which has raised many generations of men, but which will need many centuries more before men can rise (if ever) to the full height of it ; a worship that (in some form or other) is natural for every healthy human heart, and necessary for every heart that would attain health ; a worship free from intellectual doubtings and disputations, because it rests upon simple and verifiable spiritual axioms. What would we not give in these days for a simple religion !

To be rid for ever of religious controversies ; to be uplifted from the dusty atmosphere of polemical turmoil to the higher level of some safe and natural worship where one can breathe the fresh free air of peace, faith, hope, and love, so that flinging all doubt to the winds we may concentrate all our

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faculties on hopeful action—this is an object surely devoutly to be desired, and on the attainment of such a worship as this it is worth while to spend some thought and to give some attention.

But first let us be agreed as to what we mean by worship. Concerning unrighteous worship we shall have nothing to say. But as to the highest kind of worship we shall agree (without argument probably) that it contains, as one of its elements, love.

Love, however, is not all. Parents love their children; and the strong and wise love the weak and ignorant: but that love is a love that looks down. Worship implies looking up; and the love that is contained in worship must not look down, but up. This *looking up* we call awe or reverence; and we shall agree (still probably without argument) that the highest worship implies not only love but also *looking up*, that is, reverence or awe.

Closely allied to love and reverence is a third feeling which springs almost necessarily out of the other two when the worshipper turns from the object of his worship to think of himself: "Who am I that I should set up my will against the will of the Being whom I love and reverence? Since Thou art so good and so powerful, I may trust myself in Thy hands and submit my will to Thine." Trust, then (not a mere trust or belief in the existence of the object worshipped, but a trust implying some kind of self-surrender), may be added as a third element, joining with love and awe to make

up a triple combination which in its highest form we call worship.

Taking this, therefore, as a working definition of our highest worship, we have to ask where we are to find a worship that shall be noble, natural, and, above all, safe? When we say *safe*, we do not mean a worship that can be demonstrated to us as a proposition of geometry is demonstrated, or as a geometrical axiom commends itself without demonstration: but we do ask this, that it shall not be a worship based on a foundation which may be at any moment shaken by forces beyond our control.

Is there then anything which, environing our life on all sides, pressing on us as naturally and as ubiquitously as the air, causes us to feel one or all of the elements of worship? Yes, there is the glory of the visible world which has in all times drawn the heart upwards. The poet who sang how his heart leaped up when he beheld the rainbow in the sky, expressed the feeling of our remotest forefathers, and of all those great nations which have lived a healthy vigorous life and have left their mark upon the history of mankind. With awe men have looked up, even in the dawn of history, to the vast phenomena of the universe; nor have they been able to behold the well-ordered stability of beneficent Nature without a feeling approaching to trust.

But there has been absent the third element, love. Moreover, the second element, trust, has

often been feeble : not without cause, in the presence of pain and death and the physical and moral disorders of mankind. Therefore something more is needed, besides the visible world, to satisfy the instinct of worship. While we can never dispense with the revelation of God as the Architect of the visible world outside us, the Creator of the sun and moon and stars, we also need some revelation of Him as the Maker of the unseen world within us, as the Creator of righteousness, pity, justice, hope, faith. As the body instinctively expands and exults in the warmth and light of the sun, so in the unseen world of thought is there not some power that causes the soul no less instinctively to feel a thrill of exultant expansion? There is such a power in the unseen world, to which we have given the name of love; and this attracting force, which knits together families, societies, nations and mankind, points to a far higher worship than is indicated by the mere physical attraction that knits together the atoms and systems of the material world.

But where can we realise and touch with our mind this invisible object of worship? In the material universe the sun, the source of light and warmth, is the natural symbol of material beneficence; where is the corresponding natural symbol of immaterial beneficence? In ourselves? God forbid : the prospect would not be hopeful. In our neighbours? We can too often see but faint glimmerings of it there. In the collective lives of all the

good men that have ever lived? Yes; but in those broken lights the splendour is too diffused to elicit our highest worship. We need to have some one Life, which shall sum up the influence of love, past, present and to come, and which shall be to lesser lives what the sun is to the myriad reflections of its rays. The blessed illusion of Nature presents to most of us in our childhood the life of a father or mother, who is to our childish mind, in wisdom, or power, or goodness, the image of the Supreme. When that illusion breaks, where is the real life that should be found beneath it? If we can find such a life, that life will be the sun of our souls, the natural object of our highest aspirations.

Again, we mentioned but now pain, sin, and death. As long as these are recognised as parts of the regular phenomena of the Universe, it is hard for us to worship the Maker. Do but prove, or even hold out a strong and reasonable hope, that these are not regularities, but irregularities, which have crept into the work and which shall ultimately be subordinated to the purposes of the building, and then our worship can go on in the strength of faith: but till we have this faith we are at a stand. Who can grant unto us this hope or faith? Who can so imbue us with it as to deliver us from bondage to the fear of death? Who can impress upon our hearts the hope that pain, both mental and bodily, will be subordinated to the highest joy; that death will prove to be the stepping-stone to a nobler life; and that sin itself

may be made the soil out of which righteousness may spring? If there is no such inspirer of hope our need remains unsatisfied; but in any case we see clearly what we need. We need one who shall be the embodiment of the divine law of love, and who shall also solve, or at least suggest a solution of, the mysteries of pain, death, and sin.

“But if such a being ever comes into the world,”—you say, perhaps—“he will indeed claim our highest love and our trust; but will he not detach us from that other kind of worship which we naturally and necessarily give to the Architect of the Material Universe? And so, will not the human mind be at discord with itself, offering its awe to the fearful and unknown Maker of good and evil, but its love and trust to the human interpreter of good and evil, who has subordinated, and shown us how to subordinate, the evil to the good?” True, it would be so if that human interpreter and incarnation of the divine Law were to be in antagonism to the Maker. But what if that Interpreter should tell us that all His own being comes from the Maker? That His own love is but the expression of the Maker’s love? That, in a word, the Maker is rightly known only through the Interpreter? Or, best of all, that the Maker and the Interpreter stand in the relation of Father and Son? If that be so, all danger of discord passes from our worship. If that be so, then heaven and earth, God and man, seen and unseen, are leagued together, and the teaching

of the world without is brought into complete harmony with the teaching of the world within.

We claim for Jesus of Nazareth that He has revealed unto us in Himself this highest kind of worship. Putting aside all other grounds concerning which there may be the least controversy or shadow of a doubt, we claim that He, more than any other, expressed in His life, and diffused after His death, the sense of the divine Fatherhood of God as the governing principle of the world ; that He, more than any other, enabled those who trusted in Him to go joyfully from this world to the next, not through fear of pain here, not through hope of reward hereafter, but through the longing desire for His presence, through the yearning to be with Christ ; that He, more than any other, has lifted up the sinful and abject, introducing into the world the almost unheard-of power of forgiveness, which has blessed alike the forgiver and the forgiven. His influence is present and potent among us to this day, to be recognised, not only in our rarer moments of elevated thought, but in our daily lives and most ordinary habits—yes, even in the very language which is the necessary vehicle of our thoughts.

“ But,” it may be urged, “ though this is true of England and of any other Christian country, how can it be held true of non-Christian countries ? The sun is always present in every sky to exhibit and enforce the worship of the Maker ; but what token is equally present in all nations and climates

to enforce the worship of Christ?" I answer, the Family. Place the missionary of Christ in any jungle or desert of the most savage and brutal tribe, unpenetrated hitherto by civilised man; and even there will be found some sense of fatherhood. Even to the hardest and most degraded heart the message of the missionary may surely convey some intelligible meaning when he points to the little ones who are Christ's ubiquitous messengers, and says, "I proclaim to mankind a new empire in the world. The governing power of the universe is not the brute strength which you dread in the tiger, nor even the glorious and beneficent majesty to which you look up with awe and trust in the great luminary above your head; but it is that love which bound your parents to you in days gone by, and which in each age unites the generations together. That love should still be remembered by you; perhaps, if you have children of your own, the memory of it has been renewed and purified. But do you desire to see it manifested on a world-wide scale, and yet expressed in one intelligible image? Do you wish to worship it clothed and made accessible in an earthly vesture, yet not deprived of its celestial purity? Behold it then made flesh for you, in One who, without steel, or gold, or cunning, or noble birth, was made victorious through suffering, and triumphant through death; so that already He has subjected all civilised nations to His sway. This great Conqueror claims your trust, your reverence, and your love. In Him,

and not in idols of wood or stone, behold and worship the All-Powerful manifested as the Father of men."

Does not Christ's Kingdom, thus viewed, appeal to us as no less natural than powerful ; let us say, as being powerful because natural, because the law of the kingdom of heaven is the same as the law of the family on earth ? But this natural aspect is too often lost because we explain away Christ's deliberate selection of childhood as the type of the citizenship of the New Kingdom into a mere sentimental fondness for the frankness and simplicity of children. This misunderstanding arises from our own selfish and frivolous natures, and from the rooted folly of our notions concerning children. Because we cannot see the difference between the childish innocence that comes from ignorance or weakness, and the manly virtue that comes from knowledge and self-control, we are sometimes disposed to gloss over the faults of childhood and to attribute to children a faultlessness which they do not possess. Again, we are too apt to regard children as playthings to distract us from serious cares, indulging them for the sake of giving ourselves a present pleasure ; and to this selfish indulgence we give the name of love. But it was not in this selfish or sentimental spirit that Christ declared that *the angels of little children always behold the face of the Father in heaven*. What can that saying mean except that He who uses the winds and the clouds as His angels or messengers, and for whom every power of the seen and unseen world

performs some angelic service, employs more especially the ministry of children in conveying the message of divine love, thereby conforming the human race to the divine image ?

In the same spirit Christ reiterated to His disciples the necessity of becoming as little children, and of considering a little child as His veritable ambassador. His followers were to become as little children, not only in relation to the Father in heaven, but also in their relations with their enemies on earth. The unsuspecting and unreserved affection of little children—even though it has arisen too often, alas ! from ignorance—has nevertheless been a redeeming influence among mankind, from generation to generation, making war against selfishness and softening brutality. Taking advantage of this universal influence, Jesus ordered His followers, while retaining the wisdom of mature manhood, to adopt the unsuspecting nature of childhood. Instead of viewing their neighbours as enemies, or even as strangers, against whom they were to be always in an attitude of aggression or defence, His disciples were to disarm themselves, becoming, in the midst of a hostile world, as little children, without power to fear or to suspect, and by these self-disarming tactics He promised that they should conquer the world.

Let us be permitted to lay emphasis upon one or two points in this natural and reasonable aspect of the life and work of Jesus. First, He worked upon the lines of law—a definite though neglected law of

human nature. Secondly, upon obedience to this law, He based nothing less than a complete revolution of human affairs. Thirdly, amid all His humility, patience, and sorrow, while identifying Himself most absolutely with suffering humanity, He none the less exhibited Himself as the centre of the hope and trust and devotion of His followers, calling upon all that were weary and heavy-laden to come unto Him, and yet (strange paradox) alleging His very humility as the reason why mankind should take His yoke upon them: *I am meek and lowly of heart*. The whole of His life shows that this paradox to us was no paradox to Him. The best servant was the best king; the meekest and lowliest was the fittest to impose the yoke; the most obedient son was most in harmony with the will of the Father, and best able to apply His laws. As we read in the manuals of material philosophy that material Nature is controlled by being obeyed, so in the New Testament we are told by the Master of all spiritual secrets that in the unseen world the same law prevails;—whoso will serve, he and he alone shall rule; whoso giveth, **THEY** shall give to him; whoso is meek, he shall inherit the earth; whoso forgiveth, he shall be forgiven. If there is any fact patent to dispassionate students of history, it is that Jesus of Nazareth logically and naturally claimed for Himself the Kingdom over mankind as being their most devoted and loving servant.

Why is there so prevalent a blindness to the

wisdom of the divine intuition upon which Jesus based His new Kingdom? Many, even of those who worship Him, speak of His work in Galilee as though it were a mere incidental and casual episode between His birth and crucifixion; as if He went about doing good, healing the sick, and preaching the Gospel, merely to fill up the time till the hour should arrive for the sole important action of His life—His death. We fail to recognise in that Galilean proclamation the announcement of a Revolution. I call it Revolution, because to speak of it as a Kingdom of God attracts no attention now, the phrase being overworn. Yet the disciples, as well as our Lord, use all manner of phrases to show us the revolutionary tendencies of the New Kingdom. It was to be no patchwork, but a new garment; it was to be a new birth, till the accomplishment of which all creation was in travail; old things were to pass away and all things were to be new in Christ; what was highly esteemed by men would in that day be cast down, and that which was despised would be set up. The utter subversion of the old order of things is well expressed in the saying attributed to our Lord by a late tradition:—*Unless ye shall cause that which is on the right to be on the left, and that which is on the left to be on the right, and that which is above to be below, and that which is before to be behind, ye have no knowledge of the Kingdom of God.* Whatever may be the origin of these words, their spirit represents the spirit of the Galilean

proclamation of the Kingdom of God. But all this we fail to see, because the law is so simple and such an every-day matter. As if one were to deny credit to Newton for discovering the great law that binds the solar system together, because forsooth after all it is only the same ordinary law that we may observe for ourselves every day in the fall of a stone to the earth! But as in the material, so also in the spiritual world, the simplicity and universality of the law on which some great discovery is based, ought surely to increase, instead of diminishing, our reverence for the wisdom of the discoverer.

For these reasons Jesus claims worship: not a mere sentimental affection or admiration, not a mere distant reverence and cold awe, not a mere intellectual confidence in His wisdom, power, and righteousness, but that combination of affection, reverence, and trust which places Him beside God in our hearts. If indeed His life had been merely the highest expression of vain self-sacrifice, fruitless compassion, and misplaced love, we might then have loved Him, but without trust or awe: if He had been manifested to us simply as the intuitive originator of a marvellously wise, subtle, and vast plan for the regeneration of all sinful and miserable mankind, but had never forgiven individual sinners, and pitied individual sorrowers, dying as well as living with the burden of our sins and sufferings upon His soul, our trust in His wisdom and power might then have been devoid of any tinge of affection: lastly, if He had come in His own name,

planning wisely and working lovingly, but never directing our thoughts to One above, to One greater than Himself, yet with whom He was at perfect unity, then too, though we loved and though we trusted, we might not have felt that thrill of awe which we instinctively feel to be an essential part of worship. But as it is, Jesus claims from us the combination of these three feelings in the highest degree in which we are capable of feeling them—our love, our trust, and our awe: our love for His all-embracing compassion; our trust for the forethought, wisdom, and power with which He has planned and is accomplishing the regeneration of the human race; and our awe, not only for the moral grandeur of His character, but (much more than that) because we behold in Him the incarnate expression of the governing Power of the world.

In thus holding up Jesus as a necessary object of our reasonable worship, no mention has hitherto been made of some claims which may appear to most of you superior to all others. Many, for example, will think that they discern a higher proof of the divine mission of Jesus in the acts of instantaneous healing performed by Him than in the spiritual triumphs of His life. On this point let us be content, for the present, to differ. Our minds are not all similarly constituted. To some, for example, the forgiveness of the sins of the man sick of the palsy, and the conscious and deliberate introduction into the world of that marvellous

power of forgiving, successfully used by Jesus and transmitted by Him to His disciples, appeals much more forcibly than the narrative (although none can doubt its historical accuracy) which tells how the palsy itself was cured by the word of Jesus. With a large class of minds it will be otherwise, and to them the miracles of Jesus will seem of pre-eminent importance. But those who worship Jesus on the basis which is here suggested, worshipping Him not for His miracles but for His spiritual work, or rather Himself and for His life and work taken as a whole, because they cannot help loving Him, trusting Him, and reverencing Him more than all the rest of the human race put together—those will be the last to despise what may seem to them a somewhat more insecure and less worthy worship of Him. They may anticipate a time when that form of Christianity which is based upon the miracles of Christ will be terribly shaken in the minds of the masses of believers : they may even deem that the time has already arrived when it is true kindness to shake that belief in the minds of those whose learning should fit them to be the guides of the multitude, and whose profession should stimulate them to search for truth ; but even where they feel bound to destroy, they will feel still more bound to construct. What if to them the army of the Church militant seems scattering its strength in defending a too extensive line of untenable outposts which do but invite attack ! Does it follow that they should at once spread

panic through the host of their fellow-soldiers by sounding a premature alarm? Far better first prepare for the inevitable future by gradual processes, by defining and making clear, at first to a few, and through those few to the rest; the lines of those inner and impregnable entrenchments to which all will ultimately retire, and from which they themselves already look down in perfect security upon the surging battle between science and religion.

Did I say "perfect security?" Let me hasten to modify an expression that may seem too presumptuous. We are not secure: we never can be secure in the worship of Christ as long as we are liable to mortal imperfection. But the enemy that threatens us is not truth, nor even scientific speculation prematurely professing to be truth. Let science teach us what it may concerning the links that unite the different forms of existence; it will but cause us to worship with more reverence the Maker of that creative chain which hangs down from above, having, as it ever will have, its upper extremity wrapped in the clouds of heaven. In old times, before science came to sharpen our vision, we could perceive in this chain no more than four or five ponderous links; now science has helped us to discern, say four or five hundred; soon, as we hope, it will enable us to discern even more, say four or five thousand; or, if it were conceivable, four or five million. But what then? Still, as before, the upper extremity of that vast

chain hangs down from above wrapped in a darkness whither the eye of science never can penetrate. To the question, What is the ultimate cause of things? science itself dreams not of ever returning any answer except, *I know not*. We, who believe in a God, say that the beginning of the chain is wound about the throne of God; and, so far as science has taught us anything, it has helped to confirm, not shake, our belief in a divine Artificer. The chain of creation having been demonstrated to be infinitely more beautiful and subtle and orderly than we had supposed, it has become more difficult to dispense with a Creator, and more difficult to approach Him without awe. Science also has, of late, given us fresh cause for trusting as well as for reverencing the Maker of the Universe. For the insoluble problems of pain, conflict, and death are as old as creation, and not now for the first time presented to us; but the new discoveries of science make those painful problems more tolerable, revealing in many cases pain preparing the way for happiness, conflict subserving development, death subordinated to progressive life. Thanks be to Science, handmaid of Faith, and servant of the Eternal Truth, for thus helping mankind to magnify and to worship the unknown Maker of the world!

I would not indeed deny that there are intellectual dangers to faith; but they are few, and closely allied to moral dangers. The habit, for example, during youth, of setting oneself up as a

judge of the vital questions that have occupied the wisest of mankind, is partly an intellectual but partly a moral error. The literature of the present day too much encourages this habit. The condensed articles in our magazines—some of which deal with questions so momentous as the existence of a God, and solve or suggest the solution within the compass of a score of pages—may possibly be useful reading for a few thinkers who have to watch closely and exactly the varying surface of contemporary thought, but they cannot be wholesome reading for any one else. The faith in a good God, like reverence for a father, or like wedded love, or like parental affection, is an instinct which ought not to be blunted by arguing about it in the fashion of a *dilettanti*. Irrepressible doubts must be faced and grappled with; but mere suggestions of doubt we should do well to suppress by an effort of the will; the very mention of them ought not to be endured in the presence of the young.

But your main danger comes not from intellectual but from moral foes. Worship has deadly enemies, though they are not such as are commonly supposed. Reflect once more on the essentials of worship—they are love, trust, and reverence. But what if you are wrapped up in yourself, and care little or nothing for others? What if you are reserved to excess, jealous, suspicious, incapable of trusting any human being? What if you are wholly destitute of the faculty of reverence? if

the phenomena of nature inspire you with no awe? if the highest and noblest human excellence prompts you instinctively not to admire and love, but to carp and pick holes: *Doth Job serve God for naught?* The habit of reverence for men and women, when once lost, cancels for the time all faculty of worshipping God. Reverence for one's parents, reverence for the aged, reverence for the great and good in all times and ages, this is a necessary foundation of all pure religion and of all righteous worship. He that reverences not the father on earth whom he hath seen, how can he reverence the Father in heaven whom he hath not seen? Devoid of love and trust and reverence, you may repeat the three creeds night and morning if you will, but they will have no more power than a Buddhist prayer-mill to revive in you the dead germ of the faculty of worship.

By cultivating this habit of reverence; by avoiding the practice of parodying and belittling great and noble thoughts; by suspending your judgment about matters in the judgment of which the experience of age must necessarily form an element; by the avoidance of fragmentary reading, and by making yourself conversant with a few great works of the greatest spirits of all times; by endeavouring even amid the engrossing occupations of your work up here to take up some little by-work of a different nature which may remind you that others have claims upon you; and lastly, by aiming

at purity in thought, word, and deed, you will be opening your heart to that highest form of worship which finds expression in loving, trusting, and reverencing the Lord Jesus Christ as being the Son of God, one with God, the incarnate expression of the Beginning of things, the Word of God made flesh for men. While you thus strive to draw near to Him, Jesus Himself (doubt it not) will draw near to you, helping you to love Him more loyally and to trust in Him more fully. And then, being made one with Christ through faith, you will be raised up with Him to the hill of Truth, whence, looking down upon the history of creation from first to last, you will be enabled to discern in part, even through the clouds of sin and misery beneath you, that all things serve one wise purpose and conduce to one divine end. The worship of Christ will then become to you as natural as reverence for parents or as delight in the sunshine. Whithersoever you turn you will find confirmation of it; confirmation derived not only from the Scriptures, but also from the ever-present pressure of the collective facts of the Universe, from the whole history of the dealings of the Eternal Word with mankind, and from the instinctive attraction by which your soul is drawn towards every visible manifestation of the Eternal Love. You will worship Jesus of Nazareth (surely the highest as well as the happiest mode of worshipping Him!) because you cannot help worshipping; because past and

present, because things seen and unseen, because heaven and earth, alike agree in bearing witness unto Him, and in re-echoing the passionate declaration of your own inmost heart: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I should desire in comparison with thee.*

HOPE FOR THE LIVING.

And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three.—

1 COR. XIII. 13.

So far from being always considered a virtue, Hope has been stigmatised as a dangerous deceiver or as a luxury not to be indulged in by the weak. *Hope*, says the Athenian in Thucydides, *the procuress of peril, cannot indeed destroy, though she may harm, those of her employers who have a reserve to fall back upon: but to those who risk their all upon the issue of her services—and a costly servant she assuredly is—she unmasks herself only in the moment of their ruin, when her victims have no resource left to defend themselves against her recognised treachery.* Poets in the same strain cry shame upon this delusive phantom, and protest that they are—

*— tired of waiting for this chymick gold,
Which fools us young, and beggars us when old.*

Yet the common sense of mankind tells us that life would be but a poor shrunken thing without

hope; and even the poet who reviles its *chymick gold*, marvels at the fascination which it still imparts to the future in spite of our monotonous and oft-repeated experiences of the flat unprofitable past:—

*Strange cozenage! Who would live past days again?
Yet all hope pleasure from what still remain.*

Surely the common sense of the world is right. While recognising that hope may be an evil if it makes us careless or indolent, trustful to chance or to luck or to interpositions of Providence rather than to our own energies and skill, we cannot fail to see that hopelessness is a still greater evil, paralysing energy and neutralising skill. No business in life, however purely intellectual, can dispense with hope as a stimulus to activity. That impulse which the immediate pressure of pleasure or pain gives to irrational animals, hope gives to human beings, who are endowed with the faculty or necessity of looking forward. Who could toil on through threescore years or more in hopelessness? *Work without hope*, says Coleridge, *draws nectar in a sieve*: and, indeed, what possibility is there that any human being, however richly endowed with genius, should ever produce the durable results that come from harmonious and continuous effort, or give birth to anything but the perishable expressions of a mere spasmodic outburst, if he had no durable hope of anything in heaven or earth!

Let us not be put off with the answer that

"Hope is a matter beyond our control; a result of physical temperament, according to which some may be constitutionally sanguine, so that they cannot help being hopeful, others constitutionally phlegmatic or melancholy, so that they cannot succeed in being hopeful." We know, on the contrary, that hope is, to some extent at least, within our own power. By dwelling more on the bright side of things and less on the dark side, we may gradually accustom ourselves to a hopeful habit of mind, which will, in time, become a second nature.

Obviously, however, we have not yet touched the bottom of this question; for we shall be met with the retort: "What right have you to dwell on one side of the truth to the neglect of the other? In this imperfect world every subject that claims our serious attention has a dark as well as a bright side: is it honest or truthful, then, to neglect one half of the Universe because it happens to be unpleasant?" So arguing, our objectors may complete, and turn against us, the quotation we just now used against them—

Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve.

"Yes," they will say, "but—

Hope, without an object, cannot live.

"What is the use," they will ask, "of bidding us hope without giving us first some certain or probable reality to hope about? The faculty of hope is like the faculty of reason so far as this, that

both must have some foundation of facts wherein to work. Give us a permanent and reasonable object of hope and we shall only be too glad to hope; but without such an object we must be content to be hopeless. We cannot allow ourselves to be fooled, even though the fooling may lead us along a path of happiness. Better the hopeless path of truth than the Fool's Paradise of comfortable delusions."

Now one answer to this is, that hope is in some sort a necessary condition of life. All men, if they wish to avoid madness, must in some measure exercise their power of attending more to the brighter than to the darker side of nature. We know, for example, at this very moment, while we are assembled here in health and strength and peace, that throughout the world thousands and tens of thousands of souls are either passing away in the last gasp of death, or writhing under agonies of disease, or pouring forth unavailing lamentations under the despair of desolating bereavement; others, again, are plotting or perpetrating frauds, schemes of oppression, treacherous villanies, foul and unnatural crimes; others, again (most pitiable sight of all), are trembling upon the brink of sin, making a half-hearted resistance, lifting up tremulous hands to a seemingly unanswering heaven; and even while these words pass into your ears, Satan perhaps has prevailed and a soul has fallen, and a life is cast away. Who can suffer his mind to rest on such scenes as these for the same time and with the same attention as on

scenes of happiness and righteousness, and yet expect to retain the balance of reason ?

*These things must not be thought on
After these ways : so, it will make us mad. ↵*

Still there is something reasonable in the demand for an "object of hope," and the intention of the last two discourses which I have preached here has been to show that the whole universe, when illuminated by the light that streams upon it from the Cross of Christ, furnishes us with a durable object of hope in the Fatherhood of the Maker of the world, who, in the course of many ages, is conforming man to the divine image. The hope of the ultimate perfection of all things, based upon the sense of the divine Fatherhood, is the source of all healthy activity in men. In the strength of this hope we can look all evil in the face without blenching, and beneath the abyss of sin discern the vaster abyss of the divine love.

When we realise, and not till we realise, that the Fatherhood of God in various shapes and disguises is the only true object of hope, we shall be able to distinguish good hopes from bad hopes. For hope, like faith, is in itself neutral and colourless, neither a virtue nor a vice, taking its colour and its quality from its object ; and, if centred upon an unworthy object, hope itself becomes unworthy. Thus, for example, hopes of wealth may engender avarice, and hopes of ease indolence ; and hopefulness of this kind, so far

from being the sister of faith and love, is the legitimate offspring of selfishness and the enemy of all brotherhood.

But the hope that is based upon the sense of God's Fatherhood is not only filial towards God, but also brotherly towards men; and this hope is the nurse of every social virtue. This hope deceives no one, lures no one to peril, encourages no one in indolence, or presumption, or self-conceit. This hope is not a hope that God will be a Father to us, but a Taskmaster or Judge to our neighbours: it is a hope that He, being the common Father of all, is doing, and will hereafter be shown to have ever done, the best for all beings, for those that we call bad as well as for those that we call good. Again, this hope is not a hope that God will let us off the natural consequences of our sins and transgressions in this or some future existence; nor that He will suspend His laws to let our carelessness pass unpunished; no, the hope of which we speak is based upon a reverent trust in His laws as being an expression of His will, and it implies a readiness to be chastened by them because they proceed from Him; because His justice is kinder than man's mercy, and His punishments more beneficent than man's rewards.

Never did such a hope as this lead any human worker to neglect any part of duty or effort in presumptuous reliance upon some special interposition of supernatural help. O the strength and the blessing of the hope in God's Fatherhood! *Do but*

take an example of a dog, says the Essayist, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man, who to him is instead of a God. How true! and how much more true of men who find themselves maintained by no substitute for God, but by God Himself! Who has not, even in the course of his own existence, though far too rarely, experienced the presence of mind, the vigour physical as well as intellectual, the freshness of interest and freedom from anxious strain, which the most imperfect of us enjoy when in our purer moments we are conscious that our work is under the supervision of One above, on whom, when we have done our poor utmost, we can cast all the burden of our cares, and, who, out of our failures and through our imperfections can work out for Himself a perfect result?

What shall we say, then, to those who tell us that about the future we may reason but have no right to hope? Our reply will be, that we cannot reason about the future without taking into account the evidence that the world was made by a good and wise Being who has given us many faculties tending to happiness and righteousness, which faculties He cannot have intended *to fust in us unused*; and among the highest of these faculties stands hope. Furthermore we may point out that healthy natural hope, though it may work through illusions, does not delude. There is no deception in the divine providence which leads the human soul from the

cradle to the grave under the guidance of unfulfilled hopes. Hope, like faith, may be literally, but it is not spiritually deceptive: the spirits of heaven are not like the fiends—

*That palter with us in a double sense,
That keep the word of promise to our ear
And break it to our hope.*

Of the word of God's promises we may assert the direct opposite. That word is never *kept to our ear* and never *broken to our hope*. Just as the faith or trust of the child in the father (who to him is as a God) is not a delusion but a truth enwrapped in illusion, so it is with the natural hopes of childhood and of every age; with the aspirations of a generous youth and the ambitions of a virtuous man. These neither *fool us when young* nor *beggar us when old*; but, on the contrary, each bright cloud of hope, breaking as the traveller is allured onward by it from one to another stage in his life-long upward journey, reveals a brighter included cloud, to break in its turn and to disclose a still brighter interior splendour, till at last those heights are reached where all clouds shall vanish away, and the mind shall be prepared to receive the direct rays of the Sun of righteousness.

Let us put this theory of hope to a practical test by applying it to ordinary life, especially to our relations with these men and women about whom it is most difficult to be enthusiastically hopeful. How does hope affect our relations with

the common-place, the ridiculous, the vulgar, the silly, the selfish, the dishonest, the impure? Will our theory oblige us to shut our eyes to these imperfections, and to make ourselves the admirers of every fool, the dupes of every impostor? Not so. Whenever we form a hope about any human being, we shall erect it on a sure basis, and with our eyes open. Our basis will be the belief that each human being, even the worst, has a divine substratum of goodness in him, some chord of unselfishness in his heart, which will respond to the touch of the true cunning musician, though it may not respond to our unskilful handling. To use the metaphor more common in theology, our hope is based on the belief that every man is made in the image of God. The recognition of this image in the heart of every human being, though it will not prevent us from simultaneously recognising the accumulated sins and defilements that obscure and almost efface the stamp of divinity, will nevertheless effectually prevent us from regarding any of our fellow-creatures with contempt, or with that kind of pitying despair which is almost as fatally effective as contempt itself in depressing and degrading those who are the objects of it. ~

Furthermore, we shall not be shutting our eyes, but opening our eyes to one of the patent truths of human nature by bearing in mind that all hope or trust of one man in another tends to justify and fulfil itself by making the person trusted trustworthy. To those who believe in a God, the

success of hope and faith in enabling man to raise up his brother men is no less a proof that hope and faith are in accordance with God's spiritual laws, than the success of a scientific experiment is a proof that the principle upon which the experiment is based is in accordance with the laws of material nature. Why do we believe in the law of gravitation? Because it works. And for the same reason we ought to believe in hope and faith because they work.

Whenever, therefore, we see a knave, though we shall think of him and treat him in all sincerity as a knave, yet we shall also treat him and think of him as a being capable of becoming, and destined ultimately to become, something better than a knave. More than this: sometimes where fault has been committed under strong temptation, or where we have so powerful an impulse to trust an offender that we feel we can honestly (and not in a mere servile and lifeless imitation of the words of our Master) pronounce that best of all formularies of forgiveness, *I trust you for the future*, we ought to surrender ourselves willingly to the impulse in the belief that it will be blessed by Him who alone can vitalise our poor attempts at bearing the burdens of one another's sins.

But, in other cases, where we feel that we cannot honestly pronounce those solemn words, we shall humbly and sadly acknowledge our inability to ourselves, and (avoiding hypocrisy in forgiveness

more than in anything else, because, as forgiveness is the noblest, so the parody of it is the vilest of actions), we shall simply strive to deal with our brother in as kindly a spirit as is consistent with perfect sincerity. Yet, after all, we shall not do well to be too fastidious about our reputation for clear-sightedness, or too timidly cautious against occasional imposture. Woe unto us if we are never taken in at least two or three times in our lives by exorbitant claims upon our sympathy and forgiveness :—

*Better trust all and be deceived
And rue that trust and that deceiving,
Than ne'er to trust, where, if believed,
One had been blest by thy believing.*

One advantage of hope in dealing with offenders is, that it takes away from blame and punishment all the essence, and much of the appearance, of vindictiveness. Not that blame is likely to be diminished; on the contrary, it is likely to be increased by the hopeful spirit, in proportion as hope suggests a higher ideal to be contrasted with present imperfection: but he who finds fault in a hopeful spirit will never become thereby censorious or sour or malignant, because he will never either blame or punish save for the purpose of amendment.

Another great advantage of hope will be that as we shall always be looking forward to the future, we shall not be so apt to be disappointed by

unreasonable expectations about the present. Thus we shall avoid many errors in our judgment of human nature, and especially in estimating the actions and dispositions of the young. The picturesque ignorance of childhood and the attractive inexperience of youth will not so far deceive us as to make us misunderstand ignorance for innocence, or inexperience for unworldliness. So far from assenting to the gloomy dictum of that strange genius—so sanguine in science, in morals so despondent—who tells us that, *Age doth profit rather in the powers of understanding than in the virtues of the will and affections*, we shall rather recognise that, until men have known and resisted the temptations of the world, they can scarcely be called virtuous except as it were by courtesy and on the score of promise. Thus our hope and trust in the training and developing powers of age will prevent us from being too exacting in our claims on childhood and youth, and from entertaining expectations of a premature harvest of gratitude or thoughtfulness or sustained goodness.

On the other hand wrinkles and signs of the world's wear and tear imprinted upon the countenance, and possibly some moroseness of manner, will not so far cloak from our eyes the secret history of the growth of an inward life as to prevent us from discerning that few men indeed are the worse for having lived past youth; and that many a man has been taught by old age that lesson of life which neither childhood nor youth nor vigorous

manhood had power to inculcate. And reasoning from a large majority of such hopeful instances we may not unreasonably extend our inference to those few exceptional cases of apparent hopelessness, where, to all appearance, a life of almost unmixed evil has been closed by an unrepentant death. Without anticipating what falls more properly under the subject of hope for the dead, we may at least say this, that such few exceptions illustrated by the light of the general hopeful tendency, ought not to prevent us from trusting that even in such lives as these there may be causes and connections in the past, and uses and ends in the future, which, when known, will *justify the ways of God to men*. The eye of a Christian, like the eye of an artist—however it may delight in typical faces of unruffled beauty—will not find that the portrait of any individual has acquired its highest interest till it has shown marks of suffering, conflict, and thought.

A great writer of our times contrasting youth and age gives, it is true, the superiority in interest to the latter; but the interest is the interest of pathos: *I hardly ever look at a bent old man or a wizened old woman, but I see also with my mind's eye that past of which they are the shrunken remnants; and the unfinished romance of rosy cheeks and bright eyes seems sometimes of feeble interest and significance, compared with that drama of hope and love which has long ago reached its catastrophe.* Let us rather believe that the drama of hope, not

yet played out in old age, has but reached the fourth act, where the action hangs in poise for a while and the catastrophe is still impending; or rather let us regard life as a poetic prophecy, and old age as the summing up and conclusion of the poem, wherein every wrinkle and white hair becomes eloquent as the handwriting of the Chastener of mankind predicting not an earthly but a spiritual glory for the tenant of the decaying fabric.

Finally, let us take a lesson from one of the most hopeless and melancholy of men, a man of whom it was recorded by his friends as a happy omen that at last after an interval of thirteen months he was seen to smile; a man who, towards the close of his last day on earth, when asked how he felt, replied that *he felt unutterable despair*; and who passionately protested almost in his dying moments that it was torture to him to hear mention made of the mercies of Christ from which he was doomed to be for ever excluded; and this man one of the most harmless, gentle, innocent of mankind! Such a life as that of the poet Cowper is an enigma, the complete solution of which we shall never in this world attain. But in contemplating such a spectacle of gloom, we have at least to bear in mind that this same man, crying unto the Lord from the depths of his despair was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down words which have conveyed, and will always convey, to thousands of his fellow creatures, that sense of

hope and trust in Divine Providence which he himself could never permanently enjoy. If we had to search through the whole of English literature in order to select some one passage which should express most vividly and intelligibly for the simplest minds the trust in light shining out of darkness, we should look far before we found any words more suitable than these :

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense
But trust Him for His grace ;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.
Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain ;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.*

Brethren, if at times you feel dejected at the thought of your own weakness and your unfitness to do any work worth doing, take courage from the thought of this sad poet's destiny, seeing in it a typical instance of the overruling providence of God. Provided there be a perfect sincerity of purpose, your weakness and doubt and perplexity may be turned by the guiding Hand above to a better result than could have been achieved by your untroubled confidence in your ability to deal with all the problems of modern life. As God inspired Cowper, the victim of despair, to become a prophet of hope to thousands of troubled English hearts, so may He in spite of your weakness, nay, perchance out of your weakness, enable you to deliver messages of strength

to many of your countrymen; and some of you by feeling now the bitterness of doubt may be prepared for proclaiming to others a Gospel of glorious certainty.

Only cultivate the habit of high, unselfish hopefulness; for believe me the time is coming when this virtue will be peculiarly needed by all those who are called upon to act as guides to others. Destined as you are to perform the work of your mature manhood towards the close of a century and (in the ordinary course of things) after the close of a long and beneficent reign, you must look forward to a time when the minds of men will be far more unsettled than at present, and when multitudes will be ready, perhaps too ready, to welcome any change. In such a condition of things the guide who forms foolish hopes will lead to failure, and the guide who forms exaggerated hopes will lead to disappointment, but the guide who has formed no hopes will lead no whither: for there will be none to follow him; he has forfeited all claim to lead. He who aspires to be a guide and leader of others cannot dispense with that energy which springs from hopefulness and which will enable him to resist rash innovations no less than to further wise reforms.

Therefore in order that you may be hopeful to the last, begin early to put away all false unworthy hopes. Banish altogether from your heart the notion that God makes favourites either of nations or individuals, and crush as entirely unworthy

the fancy that He will suspend His laws for your pleasure, or that He will care for you to the exclusion or depreciation of your neighbours. Meditate much upon the justice of God, and accustom yourself to build your hopes upon that; remembering always that the divine justice of the heavenly Father can be in no wise inferior to the justice that was defined by Plato to be the art of doing that which is best for all.

Then, when you are freed from all petty, puerile, narrow prayers, when you have put away each selfish expectation, and each desire that is antagonistic to God's orderly laws, you may be sure that your every hope will be crowned with some fulfilment. Then nothing will seem too high, nothing too good and pure to become the subject of aspiration; and reversing the ordinary language you will be able no longer to say about your brightest anticipations, *They are too good to be true*, but rather *They are too good not to be true*.

Yet forget not that hope must go hand in hand with faith; and faith includes or implies that dull prosaic virtue which we sometimes find it hard to practise, the virtue of patience. The man that hopes can afford to be patient and to wait. Wait then as well as work. Do not hope to crowd into the three or four years of your work up here the formation of all the judgments and principles upon which you are to base the action of a lifetime. Be content to believe that as regards the nature and objects of life, life itself may have much

to teach you ; and where books fail you in your search for truth, determine not to give up the search as futile till you have taken experience as your tutor. Wait therefore in *hope : wait thou still on the Lord ; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. Trust in the Lord and do good : delight thyself also in the Lord and He shall give thee the desire of thine heart ; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.*

HOPE FOR THE DEAD.

He is risen : he is not here.—ST. MARK XVI. 6.

THE memory of the dead seems intended to serve as a kind of ladder for the living, whereon they may ascend from things seen to things unseen. As we grow older and more imbued with the spirit of this world, it seems ordained that thoughts of death and of the dead should grow proportionately stronger so as to imbue us with the spirit of another world. Infants and children, being unworldly, do not need, and do not have, this antidote against worldliness : for the disappearance of two or three kindly care-worn countenances from the midst of a child's thoughtless gambols leaves no permanent impression upon the little one's mind. But as age brings us more and more within the danger of the infection of this world, death presses his keen antidote closer and closer to our lips.

It is indeed a bitter medicine, the cup of desolation. Those whom we most respected and revered, those who were to our simple childhood as gods,

these fall the first. Old and wise friends and counsellors, teachers, parents, pass away, depriving us of the support and guidance with which we had supposed we never could dispense. Then, if not before, gaps are discerned and faces missed in the rank of our own advancing generation; brothers and sisters, friends and schoolfellows, dropping around us, convert pleasant places into sad solitudes and make a wilderness of a home. New ties are formed, but they cannot bring complete oblivion of those that each year sees shattered; and even the new ties death sometimes with his premature touch proves to be as frail as the old. Such then is one aspect of God's ordinance of death. It produces a solitude for the living, a solitude that increases from youth onward till the grave.

Yet God—who Himself pronounced that it is not good for man to be alone—did not, we may be sure, ordain this law of the encroachment of desolation for each human spirit without a divine purpose. Accordingly we find that this seeming solitude has been in reality peopled with active influences; and the memories of the dead have been very potent workers in the hearts of the living. The influence of the dead upon the living has apparently prevailed in proportion as the human being has risen above the brute creation. With the beasts of the field it is less powerful: with them, as with children, to be out of sight is to be out of mind. Yet even in some of the higher

brute creation there are traces of a permanent sorrow. Much more among the human race, whether we regard the development of national or individual character, do we find the memory of the dead to be a purifying power. Death has increased, instead of diminishing, the activity of the greatest prophets, poets, statesmen, and teachers : and all unknown and unrecognised, death, in the circle of every human family since the creation of the world, has tended to amplify the wholesome parental influence which too often has not been realised or appreciated by the child till the parents themselves have been withdrawn for ever. More than this, death has not only intensified the influence of the dead upon the living, by modifying our thoughts of life and our actions in life ; it has also lifted men's thoughts from a place of the living to a place of the dead. While making us homeless here, it has prepared a home for us elsewhere, pointing us to an eternal citizenship in a city that shall never be changed. Such is another and a brighter aspect of God's ordinance of death.

But hopes concerning the dead are necessarily connected with opinions concerning the life after death, or in other words concerning the states commonly called heaven and hell : and it is, therefore, mainly about these that I would ask your attention. That the belief in heaven has been perverted and has wrought mischief, is probable ; that the belief in hell has been mischievous is even more probable : none the less, it by no means

follows that either of these beliefs, in its unperverted shape, is mischievous or false. I shall endeavour to show that both beliefs are natural, wholesome, and probable; and indeed that the anticipation of a retribution hereafter, for good or ill wrought here, so far from being irrational, is the logical and necessary outcome of a belief in a just and righteous God.

We may begin by dismissing, with something like contempt, those objections against the belief in heaven which are based upon the metaphorical illustrations with which that belief has been set forth by seers and prophets. Golden harps, palm branches, and white robes, and amaranthine crowns—why should not these images be used to prefigure the harmonious triumph of undying righteousness? Who but a half-taught and conceited child will base a doubt as to some ultimate Day of Decision or Judgment, on the metaphor of a trumpet employed to describe the final summons to the solemn assizes of the world? Let it be once understood that by “white robes” we mean purity or righteousness, or—if we must needs be very precise—something in a more perfect state corresponding to what we call purity or righteousness in this imperfect state: and then what room is left for mockery or satire? As well assail a mathematician for using his x or y to denote the unknown quantities of his problem! He will reply that his symbols are intended to facilitate the process of reasoning: and so are our symbols likewise intended to facilitate

the process of imagination. The full recognition of the meaning and application of the principle of proportion seems absolutely necessary for the illustration of theology. It is said that Plato would have excluded from the study of philosophy all those who were ignorant of geometry. If a similar ban had barred from the writing of theological treatises all students or amateurs who were ignorant of the principle of proportion, how greatly would the vast literature of our theology be diminished, and our small store of theological certainties increased!

The principle of metaphorical or proportional interpretation, once thoroughly understood and freely applied, will deliver us from two opposite errors—first, the error of supposing that heaven and hell must needs be merely brighter and darker repetitions of earthly existence; and secondly, the error of supposing that there can be no kind of correspondence between this world and the next. Nothing could better indicate the middle path between these two errors, nothing could better illustrate the vast difference between the future and the present, and yet at the same time the dependence of the future on the present in strict accordance with the laws of cause and effect, than St. Paul's metaphor of the seed.

First for the difference. As different as the flower is from the seed, so different (we are taught to believe) is the present life from the life to come. When we are tempted to think that in the next world all will go on as in this world, only upon a

larger scale, let us sober ourselves by remembering what earth-buried, sense-bound creatures we are in comparison with our future efflorescence. Has it ever occurred to any of you, when reading St. Paul's metaphor, to frame an imaginary dialogue between two seeds freshly cast into the ground, pondering the imminent destruction of their integuments, and discussing the novel changes which they may perchance experience in that higher existence of which they have anticipations, but as yet no knowledge? Just as they might ignorantly descant upon the destined enlargement of their present capacities of expansion and absorption in that future state, limiting their anticipations to their experiences, and all unaware of the burst of brightness and of beauty awaiting them in the upper region, even so, or not much less gross perhaps, may be our purblind conceptions of heaven as compared with the divine reality.

Yet, in spite of this difference between that which is and that which shall be, St. Paul's imagery teaches us that there is a continuity of cause and effect. Such as the seed is, such will be the flower. Grant that the seed is described as earthly and the flowers as spiritual: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the things which are prepared for us by the Father*. True, but *the Spirit reveals them to us*; and St. Paul's words, as well as the general teaching of the New Testament, and the testimony of the laws of the world, indicate that there is a correspondence between the earthly seed

and the spiritual flower, a proportion between this life and the life to come. The great law of retribution upon which is based all the teaching of Christ, is not to be violated but to find its supreme fulfilment in the Day of Decision. Each man is to receive *the things that he hath done in the flesh*. What things we shall thus receive, the senses cannot reveal to us. But if we confine ourselves to statements of probabilities, not about things, but about the proportions of things, we seem to be within the province of sober reason.

Proceeding in this way, we infer that it is improbable that the present diversity of human beings will be hereafter merged in one monotonous identity. It seems more consistent with what we know of God's laws here, as well as with what we glean from the utterances of Christ Himself, to believe that the seeds sown below, instinct with diverse natures from the first, and exposed to diverse influences of earth and rain and air and sunshine, will not all blossom into the self same flowers with every leaf and petal, every hue and streak precisely similar. More likely that every present cause will be reproduced in some future effect. Our earthly drudgeries, our poor efforts and paltry successes, perchance even our honest failures and sincere repentances, will all appear in future transmutation, evolved from darkness into light, expanded and diversified by God's grace so as to contribute to the celestial colours of God's garden of the souls above; and not one hour of unselfish

toil or patient suffering upon earth but will reappear, according to God's laws of cause and effect, a blossom of glory bright to all eternity in heaven. What is there irrational or unworthy in this belief? Nay, what is there that must not be logically admitted as probable by all those who retain the blessed instinct of a belief in a Father in heaven who works by law and is never guilty of waste?

But, it may be urged, this continuity of cause and effect, before and after death, is a source of terror as well as of consolation. If we are to reap hereafter what we have sown here, how full of fear should be the harvest for many of us! Yes, there is a fear here; but a legitimate and wholesome fear, not to be lightly put aside. He must have read Nature ill and history ill, who can suppose that the training of mankind, as long as men are in their present imperfect condition, is intended to proceed without the influence of fear. But we live in an age which regards with some impatience any attempt to reform men by fear or pain, and which consequently, while ready to believe in a heaven, or retribution of joy, refuses to believe in a hell, or retribution of suffering. But is not this very inconsistent and absurd? Clearly it is; and the inconsistency is attributable to two causes—first, in some slight degree perhaps to the effeminacy and luxuriousness of the present times which shrink from even wholesome and necessary pain, but secondly, and in

a far higher degree, to the generally prevailing misconception of the meaning of judgment and punishment.

Judgment is not the mere utterance of an arbitrary verdict backed by brute force. To judge is to separate between truth and falsehood, between righteousness and unrighteousness: and the ideal judgment is that verdict which is pronounced by the judge with such a force of conviction, that the offender himself anticipates its utterance and confesses its justice. Again, the ideal punishment does not consist in accumulation of torture for infinitude of time; it is penalty adapting itself in kind and amount to each offence (upon which it follows as an inevitable consequence) and so adjusted as to produce the maximum of improvement with the minimum of pain. Such judgments and such punishments as these, what sane man can pronounce irrational or dare to laugh at, even as possibilities? What! Because we no longer confuse metaphor with literalism, because we cease to apprehend tangible flames in a material pit, does it follow that God's laws of cause and effect are to be suspended, that spiritual seed is to produce no spiritual fruit, that sin shall cease to bring forth sorrow and ill-doing to breed remorse? We blaspheme God when we degrade His just mercy into a weak connivance at imperfection, as if for the sake of a little family circle He would put a veto on His divine laws of retribution, or nullify the fundamental principles of redemption for the

purpose of giving a few select favourites a pass into Paradise.

Not in the seventh heaven of heavens, not in the bottommost abyss of hell, can we hope to escape from law or banish the presence of love. But do law and love preclude punishment? And does punishment cease to be awful because it is spiritual? How weak and sterile must be that man's imagination who can realise none but material punishment and has never learned to dread a spiritual hell! Has it never happened to any of you, in a moment, in a flash of thought, to realise and to pronounce judgment on, some inward baseness of your hearts, suddenly lit up by the convicting Spirit of God? And, if it has, only imagine such a moment of shame and sorrow protracted into an age and intensified by the new contrast between your imperfect self and a newly revealed ideal of perfect righteousness. Think of it. To sit alone, contemplating a wasted and misused past; to sit self-exiled, apart from those whom you love and honour, brooding over what might have been; apart from light yet longing for the light; stretching out thoughts in vain towards the one infinite Goodness which you yourself have banished; loathing evil, yet realising evil within yourself as an alien nature naturalised in your own soul by your own act; and in the midst of all your agony to find yourself confessing. "Yes, this is best for me. For this wilderness of pain I myself have shaped and prepared myself. Such as I now am,

for this state only am I fitted, this is just, this is righteous; and as the best do I accept it at Thy hand, O Thou that judgest rightly"—is not this, or something like this, natural enough to provoke no laughter and terrible enough to inspire even an honourable man with a sober and a purifying fear?

It may seem a paradox to speak of such a fear as being hopeful; but yet it is certain that if you give up all fear of the future you will inevitably end in giving up all hope also. It is not right nor reasonable that you should expect for yourselves or for the great majority of your infinitely diversified and imperfect fellow-creatures, that when you die, you will all immediately be transmuted into one identical perfect image. If you expect this, you expect what is not just, and you form a conception of an unjust and indiscriminating God. But if your conception of God is thus lowered, your faith in Him is lowered also; and thus all your hopes of eternal communion with Him become pallid and faint. Do not be misled by the baser meanings of which this word *fear* is susceptible, so far as to suppose that it is always a baseness; you are not yet in a condition, most of you, to *cast out all fear*.

One of our own poets rightly connects the deepest affection with reverent fear; he strove, he tells us, to gain his friend's praise because—*I had such reverence for his blame*. And the Psalmist still more clearly expresses the connection in the words: *There is mercy with thee; therefore shalt thou be feared*. We cannot apprehend, much less

appreciate, God's mercy, if we deprive Him of His attribute of justice and impute to Him a partial or indiscriminate indulgence. Surely we sometimes err in rejecting awe and reverence, confusing them with cowardice and servility. But there is a wide difference. There is a heart-searching awe, there is a purifying fear, but there is no servile crouching, in the apprehension of a hell which can no more exclude God's mercy than heaven can exclude His justice.

But, it may be urged, these considerations suggest not so much hell as purgatory. Is that then to be believed? My reply would be that we do not know enough, and, as it seems to me, we are not intended to know enough, to proceed to details in the map-making of the life to come. Such few expressions as bear upon this subject in the few fragmentary pages that make up what we call the New Testament, being most of them metaphorical, all of them coloured by context, and some of them difficult to bring into exact conformity with others, appear to supply far too slight a foundation whereon to build up a dogmatic structure of doctrine in the *many mansions* of the life to come ; so that, for my own part, I find myself unable to side with those who are called Universalists, or Annihilationists, or with those who believe in a Purgatory, or with those who enter into any detailed dogma on this subject.

Yet, though we may not have knowledge enough to construct a detailed map of the future, we

assuredly have a compass which may enable us to determine directions. That compass is the faith in the goodness and justice of God, as partially revealed to us by the goodness and justice of men whom He has made in His own image. Starting, then, from human patterns of cruelty, vindictiveness, excessive and unwise punishment, we may say, "Certainly God's punishments cannot be such as these." Again, starting from human patterns of goodness, justice, wise and useful punishment, we say, "God's chastisements may doubtless be infinitely better, more just, more wise, and more successful than these; but at least they cannot fall below these." Just as we know that two straight lines cannot inclose a space, though infinitely produced—and yet we have never seen them produced to infinity—in the same way we know, as an axiomatic truth, that cruelty, injustice, or un wisdom, perpetrated on how vast soever a scale, can never become divine, can never gain the right to be called God's handiwork; and, on the other hand, that no goodness, justice, mercy, and wisdom, though they be the highest ideals to which human imagination has aspired, can ever approach the goodness and justice, the mercy and wisdom, of the Supreme.

With this understanding, and in this faith, we may be well content to trust ourselves and the souls of those who are dearest to us, into His hands, without haggling about the exact amount of pain or punishment that He in His loving wisdom may

think fit to inflict upon us. There is a phrase, somewhat too common perhaps, which speaks of God as having two kinds of mercies for His children. If we may be permitted without irreverence to use that phrase, we might say that for those who really love God as a Father there can be no hesitation in trusting both themselves, and all the multitude of the human dead since the creation of the world, to *the uncovenanted mercies of God*. And if, indeed, we have at any time realised, however faintly, but for one moment in our lives, what it must be to be admitted into the circle of the Eternal Mercies, and into communion with the Everlasting Love, can it seem even to the best and purest of us, other than the highest privilege after long and various stages of waiting and working and suffering, at last, clinging like a child to the border of the garment of the Holy One of God, to be drawn in with Him into some inferior corner of the abode of the Presence, where one may sit down as it were upon sufferance, well pleased to catch a far-off glimpse of the splendour of the unapproachable throne?

Let us apply these thoughts to our relations with the dead: will they not bear the test? Armed with these hopes of a just heaven and (as we may now say without paradox) armed with these fears of a merciful hell, may we not stand in faith by the dead body of a commonplace human being, and, without any hypocritical or conventional exaggerations, find power to think of him in the

calm certainty that the cessation of respiration has not withdrawn that immortal soul from the merciful chastisements of a Supreme Being, *whose hand is not shortened by accidents of oxygen and carbon?* Too often an English funeral leaves a sterile dreariness in the hearts of every member of the household, when the survivors can discern for the departed no mean between the hopes of perfect bliss and the dread of infinite, endless agony. For to the majority of average men and women and children how strangely inapplicable must appear either extreme!

Imagine yourself by the deathbed of such a one as we are describing; an ordinary human being, not without faults and failings, not without vices, not without occasional grievous sins; one who has often stumbled and fallen, but has striven to rise, and has gone through life always fighting, sometimes victorious, sometimes conquered; sinned against at least as often as sinning; tainted with worldliness, yet at times generous and noble; by no means wholly unselfish, yet not without flashes of public spirit, and full of affection for an inner circle of relations and friends; honest according to conventional rules which sometimes have become dangerously lax, yet never given up to dishonesty, never a deliberate enemy of goodness. Of such a one who can feel sure that the mere casting away of the corporeal integument has made him instantaneously fit for the perfect bliss of Paradise? Yet, on the other hand, what slanderer, Satan

except, can find it in his heart to declare of such an erring, struggling, well-intending creature, that he is a mere child of evil, fit for the torments of an unending hell?

Shrinking from either expression of exaggerated confidence or exaggerated despair, must we needs keep utter silence? Standing in the presence of the lifeless form but lately tenanted by this half-developed soul, have we nothing to say, no word of comfort or of hope? Yes, surely. Surely of such a man, ay, and of a multitude of others by many degrees more imperfect, we may use with all sincerity language somewhat to this effect: "Yes, he had his faults: as we have. He does not yet seem fitted for the immediate presence of God; neither do we. Yet he had, as we have, some better moments, some kindly habits, some power of loving, some power of welcoming love; perhaps also some latent self-reproachings, some convicting aspirations after better things. The seemingly unfinished lesson of this life who knows but the great Teacher may resume in the next, and ultimately complete in some future stage of developed existence! To God, in any case, to God the Maker, and to God the Father, we may commend this His creature and His child, as we would commend ourselves, knowing that He will do that which is best for all."

If such a hope as this seems to you couched in too low a tone or at least too vague and general, bethink yourselves whether it may not be better

to have hopes general rather than particular, provided we can entertain the hopes strongly, after the manner of certainties, and entertain them also for all men ; rather than to have a thin and tremulous wish oscillating between the highest height of hope and the lowest depth of despair, a wish too that can scarcely be reasonably entertained for more than a small part of a small section of the human race. And yet, how can a hope be condemned as vague, or as being couched in too low a tone, when it commends the dead to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the perfect certainty of the ultimate best ?

However, choose, if you will, hopes more defined ; only, as you value your allegiance to Christ, admit no theory of the future that shall be incompatible with that good news which He died to give us, and which, while liberating us from every bondage, is intended more especially to liberate us from the fear of death. Are we at this moment free ? Has death no more than its due power over our minds ? Do we live in cheerful memory of those who have gone before us ? Has death no sting for us when we think of our friends in the grave ? The consciences of the greater part of Christians will not allow them to give to these questions the answer that they ought to give, nor to assert that they are freed from the fear of death. One reason for this is, that we have deprived ourselves, in our faithlessness, of one of the most potent influences which Christ has given us

to diminish the fear of death and to help us to look forward with hope: I mean the soothing and peaceful influence of communion with the dead. This we have forfeited through our superstitious faithlessness. Afraid to think of the departed, we have excluded them from all influence on our actions, from our conversation, from our quiet thoughts, yes, even from our prayers. Thus breaking God's ordinance we receive the penalty of the infraction, losing one chief source and fountain of spiritual strength and peace. The spirit of every good man and good woman, yes, and of every imperfect man and woman genuinely loved, is intended by the divine providence to act upon the surviving friends through an ideal image purified by death; and the words of Shakespeare, slightly modified, hold true of all the dead:

*The idea of their life doth sweetly creep
Into our study of imagination;
And every lively organ of their life
Doth come apparelled in more precious habit,
More moving delicate and full of life
Into the eye and prospect of our souls,
Than when they lived indeed.*

The man who keeps his mind open to the reception of these heaven-sent guests finds, year by year, an unseen spiritual abode widening before him; which becomes each year more like a home because it is tenanted by some new dear friend, and which gently supplants in his heart the growing

homelessness of the visible world. And what a stimulus to patience and constancy in honourable labour, thus to find oneself surrounded and encouraged by *a cloud of ever-present witnesses!* What an inducement to self-suppression here and to the steady pursuit of one fixed object, when we know that the pursuit is not limited by the grave, and that self-suppression and the abstinence from distractions here, mean the power to embrace and enfold vast realities hereafter! Again, what a just terror of self-indulgence, what a horror of ignoble luxury and frivolous indolence, not to speak of darker sins, must be inspired by the thought that by such base courses we are making ourselves unfit and unable to be the companions of the Eternal Goodness, and that every act or word or thought stamping itself upon our characters is producing in us a change which will have eternal consequences in separating us from, or uniting us to, those whom we most loved and revered upon earth! In our prayers, also, in our secret communion with the Supreme, how great must be the help derived from the mention of the dead. There is no need that you should pray for them with importunate entreaties, as though you would wrest them from God's hands. But to make mention of them by name, to thank God for their past earthly presence, to pray God that you and they may meet hereafter, and to do this with the calm certainty that in some way, and that the best way, and at some time, and that the best time, your prayer will be

fulfilled—what a spiritual freshness and intensity must this simple habit give unto your petitions ! How helpful are these prayerful memories to extinguish evil thoughts, to quiet fretful ambitions, and to destroy doubts and misgivings, by bestowing on the soul some present earnest of the future unutterable peace !

May God grant unto each one of you, with growing years and temptations, this growing support and confirmation to your faith. Death should be for Christians not an angel of Satan but a minister of God : and to every Christian, mourning with downcast heart the loss of some dear friend, the Angel of Death should come with a celestial message bidding us look up and seek our friend elsewhere than in the grave :—*He is not here ; He is risen.* May it be so with you. Whensoever message after message comes, reminding you through some new loss that you must *set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth*, may you find on each occasion the voice of some new helpful memory within your soul, enabling you with all sincerity in answer to the warning, *Lift up your hearts*, to make reply, *We lift them up unto the Lord !*

WHAT MANNER OF MAN IS THIS?¹

What manner of man is this?—ST. MARK IV. 41.

PART I.—THE QUESTION.

LET us suppose that Christianity, having become an extinct religion centuries ago, or never having penetrated Europe, was now for the first time being brought to light in this country. Approaching it in precisely the same dispassionate way in which we should approach any other religion,—Buddhism, for example—what should we think of it, and what would be our attitude towards the founder of it?

The scientific method of investigation would, I presume, be very similar to the astronomical method of investigating the cause of a disturbance in the heavenly bodies. Uranus, we will say, does not move in its prescribed orbit. Careless astronomers note the deviation, perhaps, and pass

¹ This sermon was originally preached in the chapel of Balliol College; but it has been much altered and amplified.

it by as an inconvenient anomaly. At last comes the astronomer who believes that there is no effect without a cause, and that consequently there must be a cause for this deviation. The direction of the deviation being ascertained, it occurs to him that there must be some hitherto unrecognized attracting body in that direction ; and, the amount of the deviation being also ascertained, he finds it possible to ascertain exactly the position and the mass of that attracting body. Nothing now remains but to turn the telescope on the indicated spot ; and Neptune is discovered.

Approaching the phenomena of Christianity in the same way, we find that eighteen hundred years ago there was a great disturbance in the Roman Empire. Under a ringleader named Chrestus, says one historian, the Jews raised a tumult. The same author speaks of a persecution directed against the Christians, *a race of men devoted to a new and mischievous superstition*. Another historian also describes the Christians as *a sect hated for its crimes*. The founder of it had been executed by the Procurator Pontius Pilate ; but the destructive superstition, though suppressed for the time, had burst out afresh, and, in thirty years from the death of the founder, had spread from Judæa to Rome. About forty years afterwards, a governor of Bithynia speaks of the temples in his province as being almost deserted, owing to the prevalence of the new religion. All who persisted in calling themselves Christians he ordered away for instant

execution. But after investigating the nature of their crimes, and this with torture, he could detect no further offence than this, that on a stated day, assembling before dawn, they were wont to chant a hymn to Christ as to a god; and to bind themselves by oath to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and every kind of dishonesty. A true Christian, he adds, could always be distinguished from one who had given up the superstition, because the former could never be induced to curse Christ.

Obviously Pliny, the governor of a province, had better means than Tacitus or Suetonius for ascertaining the nature of the Christian worship and morals. But still, so far, we only seem to discern with certainty thus much, that the new sect had already deified its founder and had connected with the worship of him some scheme of moral reform. The glimpse we have gained of the early meetings of the Christian Church will lead us to search for further evidence in the books of the new sect, and especially for evidence concerning the founder. But, just as the astronomer would have searched for Neptune in vain if he had known nothing of the laws of motion, so the student of religious history will search in vain for the cause of the phenomena of the Christian Church, if he neglects the laws that regulate human nature.

There are some beliefs that have a natural attraction for the human mind, certain motives that easily impel great masses of men. For example, a simple belief is more readily appro-

priated than a complicated one; and the prospect of happiness in some shape or other, whether protection from pain or enjoyment of pleasure, is so necessary for every part of the life of man that few religions have succeeded unless they have promised it either for this world or for the next. Simplicity, therefore, conformity with Nature, promise of happiness—these are three points which we may naturally expect to find in a successful religion. But these are not all. A religion of Nature, that is, a religion that defies the forces of the material world, being based upon the daily experience of the divine order of visible things around him, and therefore commending itself by the simplicity that underlies its apparent manifoldness, does not always need a great Prophet to inculcate it upon the hearts of the many: but a religion that would ascend above this level, declaring the unity of God, and appealing not so much to the external and visible world as to the invisible world of thought within the human heart, needs for the most part some Prophet through whose conscience the new truth must pass to the consciences of the myriads that are to believe. Such being the ordinary laws in accordance with which religions have influenced mankind, we naturally ask how far the religion of this sect in Bithynia conformed itself to these laws, and owed its success to its conformity.

The great historian who has sketched the rise of Christianity in his history of the *Decline and Fall*

of the *Roman Empire* enumerates five causes for the Christian successes :—

1. *The inflexible zeal of the Christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses.*

2. *The doctrine of a future life.*

3. *The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive Church.*

4. *The pure and austere morals of the Christians.*

5. *The union and discipline of the Christian republic.*

But is the historian really thus explaining the successes of the Christian Church? Is he not rather enumerating them? Inflexible zeal, purity and austerity of morals, union and discipline—no doubt these qualities tend to success; but is not the production of these qualities in itself the greatest success of all? And the question for us is, What was it that produced them? As for “miraculous powers,” one has yet to learn that the “ascription” of them, without any basis of real power, can be of any permanent benefit to a young society aiming at moral reform, and prevented by *purity and austerity of morals* from the practice of fraud. The doctrine of a future life had undoubtedly a great influence upon the Christian Church; but it was not peculiar to Christians. What then was the cause that made the doctrine so much more powerful among them

than in other societies? May not the successes of this sect called Christians be attributable in some measure to the influence of their leader, Christus, by whose name they were called, and to whom *they sang hymns as to a god*? Even if it prove otherwise, ought we to assume that he exerted no influence till we have carefully investigated his life? Does it seem scientific, in describing the causes of the success of a religion which cannot be classed among the religions of Nature, to leave entirely out of account the character of the founder?

On the contrary, the scientific method would be to assume, even before investigation, that in all probability the success of such a religion is at least partially attributable to the qualities of its originator. Before turning therefore to the books of the new sect, we shall be prepared to find not only some great truth adapted to the needs of human nature, but also a preeminent Character. Our scanty evidence from external history tends in the same direction. Suetonius and Tacitus in their brief and erroneous statements, Pliny in his closer view of the new society, seem all to point to a leader or prophet who was from the first, and even after death continued to be, the centre of the new movement. But now, turning from external evidence to the earliest internal records of this religion (which, remember, we are supposed to approach for the first time, disinterring it from oblivion as an extinct religion), we experience something like a feeling of disappointment at finding in these books

a considerable admixture of the miraculous element; our first impulse is lazily to put aside the whole mass of evidence as unhistorical.

“The explanation,” we may say, “is the obvious and ordinary one. Three causes were at work to produce this disappointing result, and to obscure facts in myths. In the first place, the Messianic expectations of the Jewish followers of this Chrestus, or Christus, when concentrated on him as their Messiah, obliged them to believe that he had wrought miracles after the manner of their ancient leaders and prophets; in the next place, there was in those days prevalent among the lower classes throughout the Empire an inexhaustible craving for miracles, unchecked by any appreciation of the laws of Nature; in the third place, the common worship of demi-gods, such as Heracles, the son of Zeus, and the practice of deifying the Roman Emperors after, if not before, their death, would render it natural to deify the founder of this religion, and for that purpose to elaborate a web of miraculous circumstance about his life and death. It is deplorable, but no doubt at the time inevitable, and now irremediable. Some truth may possibly lie beneath these myths; but what it is we shall never be able to discover.”

Possibly we might remain content with pronouncing this judgment, and put the whole matter aside. In that event, we shall be content to remain for ever in ignorance of the cause of the greatest revolution in the history of mankind.

But perhaps we might be so far interested and attracted by the doctrines that met us in the books of this extinct religion that we felt unwilling or even unable to dismiss them so readily from our minds. In that case, we might appropriate the spiritual thoughts of the books without accepting as historical the facts with which these thoughts were connected by the writers. "In the sacred books of this ancient sect," we might say, "there present themselves precious truths which our consciences attest to be true: the conception of God as a Father, and of Eternal Life, attainable by men through faith in Him; the thought of an ideal Son to whom men are to be conformed, and through whom we are to approach the Father; the doctrine that men have received power from Heaven to forgive one another's sins, and thereby to impart righteousness to each other; the doctrine that self-sacrifice constitutes the ideal life for men; and that gentleness, benevolence, and the unsuspicious disposition of children are not only the most amiable but also the most powerful qualities in humanity—these thoughts," we may say, "even considered as thoughts, are so precious that we cannot afford to part with them. It is possible that they come to us through Jesus of Nazareth: possibly they may have been invented by Paul, or Peter, or John. On this point we shall always remain in doubt, but as to the beauty and spiritual truth of these doctrines, whencesoever derived, there can be no doubt. Let us therefore be thankful that we have received

them without troubling ourselves further about their source. We regard the Gospels, not as a history, nor as a drama with a hero in it; but as an epic wherein the centre is, not a hero, but a principle. They exhibit the triumph of righteousness through suffering, a triumph ordained from the foundations of the world. Regarded as a history, the Gospels must always lose much of their legitimate influence amid the strife of critics and theologians: regarded as a spiritual poem they will possess an undying interest for all ages and all races of mankind. But as for the founder of this wonderful religion we have not, nor ever shall have, the means of answering the question what manner of man he was."

But surely these somewhat pusillanimous counsels ought not to be adopted save as a last resort! If, in the investigation of all that may be called human religions (as distinguished from religions derived from material nature), the character of the founder is for the most part an important element, more especially does this seem to be the case in the religion which we are now investigating. Pliny has told us that the sect met at stated times to worship their founder. The books of the sect, though they may not go so far as that, at least exhibit him as offering himself to his followers as the representative of the Supreme. Moreover he seems to have left behind him no code of laws, no collection of precepts of any length, no stated form of worship, nothing but a spirit of allegiance to

himself, and of trust in a heavenly Father whom he revealed to them. To investigate, therefore, Christianity without Christ, or to adopt Christianity without Christ—is not this like adopting an allegiance to a blank, and a faith in a nonentity?

Why not treat this ancient religion with the same fairness and industry with which any other human religion, Buddhism, for example, would be treated by scholars dispassionately investigating it? In treating of Buddhism we should undoubtedly put aside all the miraculous element; but obscure and mythical as are the traditions concerning the life of the founder, we should at least make an effort to elicit from them, and from his precepts, some explanation of the success of his religion.

A life of Gautama, the founder of the Buddhist religion, has recently been written in this inquiring and appreciative spirit, and it reveals to us a character which makes it easier to understand how Buddhism spread through Asia.¹ Take first the following sayings indicative of the intense purity, unworldliness, and unselfishness of this great teacher: *As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her son, even her only son: so let there be goodwill without measure among all beings: The real treasure is that laid up by man or woman*

¹ This admirable little book, which ought to be in the hands of every student of the New Testament, is entitled *Buddhism, a Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Gautama, the Buddha*, by T. W. Rhys Davids. Published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

through charity and piety, temperance and self-control ; though he leave the fleeting riches of this world, this treasure a man taketh with him : One who followeth the Buddha should not be careful about these things, food, bed, seats, clean robes and water, like a water drop which adheres not to the lotus leaf. Take also the following protest against ceremonial morality :—Not by birth doth one become a low caste, not by birth doth one become a Brahman ; by his actions alone one becometh a low caste, by his actions alone one becometh a Brahman : Anger, drunkenness, obstinacy, bigotry, deception, envy, self-praise, disparaging others, high-mindedness, evil communications—these constitute uncleanness, not verily the eating of flesh : Reading the Vedas, making offerings to priests, or sacrifices to the gods, self-mortifications by heat and cold, and many such like penances performed for the sake of immortality, these do not cleanse the man who is not free from delusions. It is clear from these and many other passages that to this teacher had been revealed the sublime secret, that in living for one's neighbours a man can find his own most perfect peace. The fabulous story that he gave his own flesh to feed a starving tigress exhibits the spirit of his life, and, taken in conjunction with his doctrine, explains much of his success. No mere lip-repetition could have so inculcated these spiritual doctrines upon the hearts of millions of common-place human beings. There was a great Character at work. One mighty human nature

served as the *sharp two-edged sword* to pierce the souls of men and force a path for the truth. In the legends (full of fable though they are) which describe his early meditations, his separation from his wife for the sake of the truth, his long temptations and his ultimate triumph, we see no less than in his teaching, an intense pity for the miseries of mankind, and a passionate desire to suffer for their sakes and by his pain to diminish the pains of others. What bigot can be so far possessed with the Evil Spirit as not to feel some thrill of sympathy and admiration for so pure and holy a being? What believer in a righteous Providence can fail to recognise in this great Teacher the Eternal Word of God speaking through this pure doctrine and manifesting Himself through this sublime life?

But the same source which reveals to us the causes of Gautama's success indicates with little less clearness the reasons for his failure. There was not revealed to him any definite basis for that universal benevolence which he inculcated on his followers. He was determined to be benevolent to all; but he had no sufficient basis to his benevolence. He could bid a disciple thank and praise his persecutors and murderers for their kindness in ridding him of the burden of life; but such spasmodic self-imposture as this could never be a substitute for the Heaven-sent intuition that even in one's persecutors and murderers there exists the divine image to which they are destined ultimately

to be conformed. He could teach his followers to act towards all as brothers ; but he could not base the doctrine of the universal brotherhood upon the truth that all are children of a common Father in heaven. Patience, not hope, was the basis of his teaching ; or, if hope, the hope of escaping from pain to painlessness. He could inculcate patience under bereavement, and resignation under disease or other sufferings as being the inevitable results of causes in some previous existence ; but he could not teach that bereavement was but temporary, and that suffering was a divinely-ordained preparation for eternal blessedness.

With him, the highest good was to destroy the natural thirst of humanity ; not to satisfy it with the Waters of life. For the follower of the Buddha there was to be no pleasure, no desire ; *for where pleasure is not, there is neither contentment nor satisfaction of heart ; therefore no passion ; therefore no enjoyment. But where is no enjoyment, there the saint is very near to Nirwana.* This is the philosophy of Epictetus, the lame slave, an unnatural philosophy, natural only for slaves, and for all that are melancholy and maimed creatures, placed amid unnatural surroundings, and bereft of natural joys. *Desire nothing ; that thou mayst have all that thou desirest.* But Nature fights day and night against such philosophies and conquers in the end ; and her voice bids us desire and evermore desire, and hope and trust and look forward and ever forward from the cradle to the grave, for some one or for something

who shall satisfy and not destroy our longings. Patience ; yes, but patience in hope. *Wait patiently for Him and He shall give thee thy heart's desire.*

Thus the religion of the Buddha had Nature as its adversary : and on all sides the glory and splendour of the world testified against it. For Gautama, though no ascetic, seems to have considered the world an enemy, in a very different sense from that in which the Christian religion speaks of the hostility of the world. We know that even St. Paul speaks sometimes of *this world* as representing an evil principle ; as being present and therefore antagonistic to the future ; visible, and therefore antagonistic to the invisible. But St. Paul knew from the Scriptures of Israel that this antagonism arose from the weakness of the mind of man ; not from the imperfection of the universe, which was pronounced *very good* by Him who made the world, by Him whose glory *the heavens declare*, and who made *all creatures in His Wisdom*. To the Buddhist, on the other hand, not recognising this consecration of created things, the world seemed a prison ; and if it was goodly and attractive, so much the more ensnaring and fatal. To the follower of the Buddha every natural appetite was a snare ; everything of beauty, a trap to catch the soul ; every inducement to exist, a decoy ; every sign or token which seemed to indicate that the world was made to be our home, was to the Buddhist a sign that the world was made amiss ; and every trace of what we call order bore witness (for him,) to the negation of design.

What manner of man then was this, who on such a basis of negation and hopelessness erected such a superstructure of universal benevolence, and constructed a religion which, even now, numbers its adherents by millions? Surely a marvellous man, a soul most richly inspired, and one whom our Lord Himself would hail as one of His forerunners. But we are unconsciously gliding into Christian language, forgetting that we are for the present dispassionate students of ancient religions, and rediscoverers of extinct Christianity. Let us therefore content ourselves with saying that this great Teacher, in inculcating universal benevolence and a life of self-sacrifice as the source of the truest peace, discovered a responsive chord in the hearts of men and touched it with a success which shows that he combined a singular intuition into the natures and needs of men, with a singular force of character. He was an almost unique leader of men, one of the motive powers of the moral world; and the student who is ignorant of his work, is ignorant (to use such language as might have been employed not necessarily by a Christian, but by a Jewish philosopher, say by Philo) of one of the highest and purest manifestations of the Eternal Word of God.

Now all that we ask for the founder of Christianity is that his life and his teaching should be investigated with the same dispassionate fairness with which we would approach the ancient biography of the founder of any other religion. Put aside, if

you will, everything that is supernatural ; reject even those miraculous acts of healing which are best authenticated and which seem to me most certainly true ; consider Jesus of Nazareth simply as a man, simply as a teacher, simply as a moral reformer ; then, when you have done this, consider his influence, after his death, on his Apostles, on his enemy Paul, on those who have believed in him for eighteen centuries, on the age in which we now live : and, when all is considered, ask and answer, as best you can, the question, *What manner of man is this ?*

WHAT MANNER OF MAN IS THIS?

What manner of man is this?—ST. MARK IV. 41.

PART II.—THE ANSWER.

THE first point that suggests itself to us, on a closer examination of the books of the New Testament, is that the miraculous element in the best authenticated records of the life of Christ is not nearly so prominent as it at first sight appeared. The earliest documents of all, certain letters written by one of the followers of Jesus, contain very little reference to his miraculous works; and, though St. Paul undoubtedly asserts (or rather in the most natural way assumes) that wonderful works of healing were commonly performed by the followers of Jesus, he makes no mention of any miraculous birth, nor of any other kind of resurrection except that which had been manifested to St. Paul himself, that is to say, through the medium of an appearance.

Turning to the three earliest biographies of the founder, we find that they are all based upon some pre-existing tradition earlier than any of the three. Disinterring this original tradition from the three Gospels, we perceive that this early document concurs with the Epistles of St. Paul in making no mention of the miraculous birth or the miraculous resurrection. In the document that comes next in chronological order (our St. Mark), we find the same omissions. In the next (our St. Matthew), these omissions begin to be supplied, but (especially in the matter of the resurrection) very briefly; and the influence of prophecy (before perceptible) begins to be far more distinctly perceived in additions apparently intended to give prominence to fulfilments of Messianic predictions. In the next (our St. Luke) the important omissions of St. Matthew on the subject of the Resurrection, are amply supplied by clear definite narrative. In the last (our St. John), a wholly new biography is written from a spiritual point of view, omitting almost all the miracles of the earlier biographies and inserting none but a small number, each of which is obviously the symbolical centre of a doctrinal context; and here the resurrection is so amplified that Jesus on earth after death is exhibited as living with his disciples almost as familiarly and freely as before he died.

If on the one hand the obvious growth of the supernatural element traceable in this series of writings prevents us from accepting the later

accretions or additions as equally historical with the former nucleus, on the other hand it must also occur to us that the original nucleus itself, and especially that part of it which is free from the supernatural element, must be peculiarly trustworthy. Examining, therefore, this Original Tradition more closely, we find, or think we find, that the few accounts of miracles (not works of healing) therein contained may be easily explained as the result of metaphor misunderstood. But further we find that, however the miraculous element may retire into the back-ground, there is never absent from any page of the earliest records of the doctrine of this teacher one remarkable characteristic. Call it, if you like, self-assertion, but at least recognise the fact; I mean the position claimed by Jesus for himself as being the necessary centre of the new religion. His disciples were not merely to follow him, but to *believe in* him. He proclaimed a Kingdom of God based upon the faith that God is the Father of men; but the central part of the constitution and practical working of this New Kingdom consisted in this, that the allegiance of men to the Father in heaven was to pass through Jesus himself; who, though he called himself the Son of man, nevertheless by all his words and actions manifested that he considered himself the revealer of God, in a very different manner from any of the former prophets of his people.

Looking further into the nature of this Kingdom,

we see that it was not a mere ideal, but a scheme intended to be practically realised, and that its consequences would naturally be, and ultimately were, a moral Revolution. It was nothing if not practical. From the axiom of the Fatherhood of God Jesus deduced the brotherhood of men. True, many men were unworthy to be called the sons of God: but all had the capacity to become worthy. Strictly speaking, indeed, none were worthy, not even the best; but all by repentance and faith could be conformed to the divine image. If they asked, "Faith in what?" his answer was, Faith in the Father whom he himself revealed to them. If further the question was asked, by what means he revealed the Father, the answer was, partly through the visible works of God, the sun, and rain, and flowers; partly through the human relation of Fatherhood; but partly and mainly through himself. He declared that he himself had the power of conforming men to the divine image by purifying them of their sins; but his purification was not by water or blood or by any of the well-known means common in ancient religions, but through simple trust on the part of the sinner. The sinner had but to trust in him, the Son of man, and he could at once remove the sins of the most sinful. Nay, it was to the sinful and to the lost, or to those who felt themselves such, that Jesus especially came.

This power of uplifting the sinful is a natural and recognised power of human nature. The

faculty of forgiveness had been in use among men long before the coming of Jesus, and is in use among thousands now who have never heard of his name. But it was a discovery reserved for Jesus that this power was divinely ordained as the key whereby all must pass into the divine Kingdom. He in his own person typified and expressed the Heaven-sent forgiveness; to him the Father had given authority to forgive, and not only to forgive, but also to impart this power to others. And in his hands and those of his disciples, forgiveness became so transmuted, exalted, and strengthened, that we scarcely recognise in it the same virtue as that which, under the same name, was practised by those who forgave before the coming of Jesus. Suffice it to add, that this power so mystically exalted, and so authoritatively claimed, appears to have answered the expectations of Jesus, and to have speedily drawn towards him and his disciples the poor, the wretched, and the sinful throughout Galilee during his life, and throughout the Roman empire shortly after his death. Nor did this attraction mean a mere passing from one religion to another; it involved a simultaneous moral reform such as is described by Pliny. In later times there sprang up among the followers of Jesus the fancy that he had communicated his power to none but a few of his disciples, who in turn were to transmit it to other chosen few; and thus the faculty of forgiving degenerated into a sacerdotal rite. But the early doctrine of Jesus is

clear. All his followers were to forgive : and they were taught daily in their prayers to recognise that their power to be forgiven depended on their power of forgiving. It was a spiritual and not a technical or professional gift. The gift might be more in some and less in others : but none could be entirely without it who were not also entirely destitute of the spirit of Jesus.

This aspect of humanity is a very different one from that enjoined upon the followers of the Buddha. The latter, if insulted, were instructed to praise their insulters for not having struck them ; if struck, to praise the strikers for not having wounded them ; if wounded, to praise the wounders for not having slain them ; if persecuted to death, they were in their dying moments to praise their murderers for having delivered them from the burden of existence. But the followers of Jesus, in blessing their enemies and praying for their persecutors, were not instructed to praise or thank them, but simply to wish well and to act well towards them, as being brothers in whom the image of the common Father, though for the time obscured, might be restored by forgiveness. The former precept enjoins an amiable self-imposture ; the latter enjoins a moral effort based on the truths of human nature and the divine will. To think well of the brutal and base was admitted to be a hard task. It required faith. But Jesus implied that he could give the necessary faith to those who trusted in him. Are we disposed to condemn this

“ thinking well,” as being not unlike the Buddhist self-imposture ? Our every-day experience is against such a condemnation, proving that this faculty of “ thinking well ” about one’s fellows justifies itself by making them worthy of our good thoughts ; and that Jesus increased and almost originated this faculty in his disciples, is matter of history.

But this difficult task of forgiveness, besides requiring faith, involves pain. None can forgive a sinner without sympathizing with him ; and to forgive the sins of the brutal, the base, and the impure, involves a pain in the forgiver, intense in proportion to his power of sympathy and his hatred of sin. That man will forgive most perfectly who most nearly realizes the sins of others as his own. If, therefore, Jesus was successful (and who doubts this ?) in the practice of the art of forgiveness, any student of human nature will admit that he must have proportionately realised and sorrowed for the sins of his countrymen. And that it was so the Christian records teach us. He was filled with compassion for them ; he bore their sins and carried their iniquities ; it was a burden and a weariness to him to *endure that perverse generation*. Yet he did not shrink from the task as if it were out of his province. On the contrary, he considered this service to the lowest of the low to be his appointed work. It was his mission to give up his life for men, and especially for the lost, the miserable, and the sinful. So far from claiming exemption from pain, or immunity from service, because he was the

leader of others; on the contrary, he claimed for that very reason that in service and in suffering he should be pre-eminent. *He that will be greatest, let him be your minister.* No mention is made in the whole of the biography of Jesus of any sacrifice offered up by him in accordance with the Mosaic law; but it is clear that the sacrificial spirit pervaded the whole of his doctrine and his life.

Such then was the key that gave admission into the new Kingdom of God—forgiveness through repentance and faith. As to the relations of the citizens among one another, or as to their conduct towards the external world, Jesus laid down no precise or detailed rules. From a Jew, brought up under the Mosaic law supplemented by minute traditions, we might have expected some attention to detail. But Jesus authoritatively abrogated the law. Moses had ordained regulations concerning divorce; Jesus ordained other and opposite regulations. The strict observance of the Sabbath seemed to spring naturally from the Law; but Jesus declared that the Son of man was Lord also of the Sabbath. True, he claimed to abrogate the Law by fulfilment and not by destruction: yet the result was the same. The whole of the Levitical code was virtually swept away when Jesus taught, that *not that which goeth into a man defileth him, but that which proceedeth out of the man.* This authoritative abrogation of the Law—which at once distinguishes Jesus as altogether different in kind from any of the great

prophets of his nation—left his disciples in the Kingdom of God without any rules to guide them. What then was to be their guide, and what their substitute for the Law ?

During his life he was to be their guide. They were to *come to him*, and *he would give them rest*. He answered their questions, solved their difficulties, and instructed them in their duties. But, besides himself, he pointed to a certain principle or relation which would help them. He bade his disciples contemplate childhood: not the ignorance, nor the selfishness, nor the thoughtlessness, nor the crudeness of it; but its trustfulness, innocence, and simplicity. These qualities they must strive to attain; first, in their relations with the Father, then, in their relations with their fellow disciples, next, in their relations with the world. Children, he said (no less than the winds and the lightning), were the angels or ministers of the Supreme, and their *angels always beheld the face of the Father*. That is to say, the institution of childhood is constantly conveying to each generation of mankind messages of the brightness of God's love, conforming men to the divine image. Placing a child among a circle of his disciples he styled the little one his ambassador, even as he himself was the ambassador of the Father: *Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me*. Thus, in the place of a code of laws, this Teacher seems to have cast his disciples upon

nothing but a principle, bidding them live as children of God and brothers of men, and leaving to them the task of working out this principle in detail.

But after the Teacher's death, who was to be then the guide of his deserted followers? What was to be then their substitute for the Law? To answer this question we should find ample materials in the Fourth Gospel; but in our present sketch, as we are confining ourselves entirely to the Original Tradition common to the three first Gospels, or including only such supplementary doctrine in the Synoptic Gospels as is readily credible, the Fourth Gospel lies out of our province. Yet the account of the Lord's supper, common to the Synoptic Gospels, suggests an answer, strange, but undoubtedly historical. We accept in that account only the parts common to the three Gospels. The statement in St. Luke's Gospel, that Jesus ordained this Feast as a Memorial to himself to be kept up for all future time, we must put aside as not being supported by the other two Synoptists. But we cannot put aside the statement found in the three Gospels, and confirmed by the Epistles of St. Paul, as well as by the practice of the Church from the earliest times, that, on the eve of his betrayal and death, a few hours before his death, this teacher broke bread and distributed wine to his disciples and bade them partake of the former as *his body*, and the latter as *his blood*. How are we to interpret this act? By the light of the laws

of human nature, and in the same way in which we should interpret a similar act recorded of any other prophet. If such a narrative, stated by trustworthy authorities, and confirmed by the evidence of an early unbroken practice among his followers, had been narrated to us of the founder of any other religion; if, for example, instead of the legend that he gave his flesh to feed the starving wild beasts of the forest, this simple well-attested narrative had been handed down to us concerning Gautama, should we have found a difficulty in interpreting it? Surely we should have agreed that the gift of the *body* and the *blood* typified the gift of himself, the sacrifice of his life for his disciples and for the world, the outpouring of his spirit passing from himself into those for whom he had lived, and for whom he was ready to die. And this we should have confidently asserted, even though we knew that the founder of the Buddhist faith had not those hopes about a future existence and an undying triumph of righteousness, which were common to the Jews in the times of Jesus of Nazareth, and which find prominent expression in his teaching. Much more willingly, therefore, must we accept as historical this account concerning a Teacher whom the unanimous consent of evidence proves to have presented himself to his disciples as the source of Forgiveness, the Redeemer of the lost, the Revealer of the Father, the Giver of Eternal Life.

We have taken the account of the Lord's supper

as our basis for an investigation into the attitude of Jesus towards the future, because that basis is historically firm. But now—finding in the historical account of this solemn funeral-feast wherein the Teacher bequeathed himself to his followers, such expectations of future influence or future presence among his disciples, as are probably unparalleled in history—we pass to the doctrine of Jesus concerning the future, prepared there also to find (amid some accretions and “prophecies after the event” added by later writers) much even in the genuine utterances of Jesus that will seem unparalleled and unique.

That he should have uttered prophecies about the coming calamities of his countrymen is indeed by no means unparalleled. Such predictions were common among the prophets of his people; and recently John the Baptist, reintroducing them, had threatened the tree of Israel with destruction beneath the Roman axe, much in the same way in which Isaiah had spoken of the axe of Assyria. If, therefore, Jesus considered that the moral corruption of the teachers of the people must needs infect the whole of the nation and bring down from Heaven a national retribution, herein he was merely following on the lines of ancient prophetic thought. If, also, he spoke of a Day of Decision or of Judgment, when the evil should be separated and distinguished from the good, herein also he was but treading in the steps of Isaiah and Ezekiel. If he had not said these

things, he could not have been a Jewish prophet. Such sayings as these, therefore, attributed to Jesus by the earliest records, the student accepts with perfect faith; and all the more readily because the earliest record of all contains one of the most remarkable sayings ever attributed to any prophet, namely, that Jesus himself *did not know* of the *day or the hour* at which the great Decision would be consummated.

But along with these prophécies of destruction, retribution, and judgment, are mingled prophecies of a Coming of the Son of man. Are we to accept these too as historical? Were not these predictions borrowed from the book of Daniel where they refer to the Messiah? Was it not natural that after the death of Jesus his followers, identifying him with the Messiah, should apply to him these as well as other Messianic prophecies, and thus console themselves for his absence by remembering that he had predicted his return?

In order to answer this question, let us briefly review the character assumed by Jesus. We have seen that he spoke and acted as *one having authority*, an authority greater than that of the semi-divine national lawgiver Moses, who was popularly believed not to have died after the manner of men. He claimed authority to abrogate the Law, to supersede the Sabbath, and to forgive sins. He offered himself to the disciples as the type of perfect sonship to God, though habitually calling himself the Son of man. He

called upon all that were miserable and sinful to come to him, and to place their faith in him, and he would give them rest and guide them to Life Eternal. In every respect he presented himself to his followers as the visible centre of their religion, the image of the invisible Father. This being admitted as historically true, we are now confronted with the objection that he is said by his followers to have identified himself with the Messiah, and to have predicted his own future triumph after death, which, say certain students, he could not possibly have done.

But why not? Here is one who came claiming to be the Redeemer of mankind. That at least is undeniable. But the name commonly given by the Jews of those days to their expected redeemer was Messiah. Was it not natural then that those who believed him to be their Redeemer should hail him by that name, and that he should accept it? That he should have claimed all, and more than all, the powers of the Messiah, and yet have refused to allow himself to be called by that title, could only have arisen from a disbelief on his part that any Messiah would come. But such a disbelief, though possible for a Jew in Alexandria, would scarcely have been possible for a Jew born in Palestine. We ought not, therefore, to be led to doubt that we are still treading on historical ground, even though we find sayings of Jesus which assume, though they do not assert, that he was not only a deliverer but the Deliverer who

had been for many generations expected as the fulfiller of the Prophets. We may add that the account of the manner in which Jesus treated the Messianic expectations of his countrymen does not suggest any invention of later times. He is represented as coming forward at first in Galilee as a Redeemer of Israel, making no mention of Messianic claims. For a long time his followers (if we put aside the Fourth Gospel) seem not to have identified him with the promised Messiah. Only by degrees did it dawn on them (and we are left to suppose that possibly only by degrees was it revealed to him), that his Redemption made all other redemptions superfluous, and that no other could be Messiah if he was not. But this does not savour of invention. Inventors would have made Jesus proclaim, or his disciples confess, or perchance prophets predict, even from the very first, that the new Teacher was not a mere teacher, nor a mere prophet, but One greater than a prophet, the Christ of God. But none of these additions can be found in the Original Tradition.

We pass to the doctrine of Jesus concerning death. He is recorded to have taught his disciples to consider it of no account. In those days the doctrine of the Resurrection was commonly held by the masses of the people, and it was taught by Jesus no less than by the Pharisees. He is said to have exhorted his disciples to fear not the death of the body, but only the death of the soul. Physical death, says the latest of the three Synoptic Gospels, was not to be

regarded as even a trifling inconvenience : *Some of you shall they cause to be put to death : but not a hair of your heads shall perish.* The record is a somewhat late one ; but the saying sounds far too bold to be a late invention. And this view of physical death is consistent with the Teacher's view of all material things—of bread, wine, corn, fire, leaven, and the like. They were all—so he taught his followers—of no account except so far as they corresponded to spiritual realities. Earthly life was of no avail except to be spent or thrown away for the purpose of obtaining heavenly life : *He that saves his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it.* Students of the life of Jesus may condemn such utterances as fanatical, but they cannot deny the historical probability, or even certainty, that they were indeed uttered, not by the pupils, but by the Master himself. It is a consistent, nay, it is a necessary, part of the doctrine of Jesus to proclaim the triumph of life over death.

But if this was the doctrine of Jesus concerning the life of his disciples, we may expect to find indications that he had similar thoughts concerning his own life. If it was true of his followers that by casting aside their lives, they should find them, and that though they might be slain yet not a hair of their heads could perish, we may expect to hear about himself also that he defied death to injure his work, and predicted his own triumph over it. Here, however, we are met with a

prophecy imputed to Jesus, and this too by all the Synoptic narratives, a prophecy which no dispassionate student of history, approaching it from the natural side, can accept as historically probable, without some explanation. He is said not only to have predicted his death, but also that he should *rise again on the third day*.

Turning, however, to the books of the Prophets we obtain an explanation of this apparently unnatural prediction. Not the most sceptical of investigators will find any difficulty in believing that Jesus, looking forward to an ultimate triumph over all obstacles, adopted and appropriated as consolation for himself and his followers in moments of depression and seeming failure, the latter part of the well-known words of the prophet Hosea: *Come and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight*. Whether Hosea used the words *in the third day* literally, or (as the expression is used of past time in Hebrew) loosely to denote "in two or three days," that is, in a short time—this matters nothing for our purpose. It suffices to know that this prophecy of *the third day* existed, and might naturally be appropriated (without any stress upon the literal meaning) by a teacher who undoubtedly considered that the prophecies pointed to himself.

Consider, also, how naturally and, so to speak,

undramatically, without any tinge of sensational invention or mythical exaggeration, the predictions of Jesus concerning his own death are recorded in our earliest histories. Had they been invented, we should have expected some mysterious hint or prediction of death from the very first, even at the outset of his career. The shadow of the cross would have been depicted over the cradle at Bethlehem or in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. And so indeed it is in one of the later Gospels, which, in the earliest Christian hymnology, causes the aged Simeon, even while blessing the infant Jesus, to foretell the sword that is to pierce the mother's heart. Similarly, in the latest Gospel of all, while performing his very first miracle—the production of the *blood of the grape*—Jesus is related to have uttered a hint of that future *blood of the grape* which could not be poured out as yet because his *hour was not yet come*. But in the earliest records there are none of these hints or foreshadowings. Not a thought of ignominious death clouds the brightness of the early pages of the Original Tradition. Only after the death of John the Baptist does it seem borne in upon the mind of Jesus that he too must anticipate a violent end. The anticipations of death, and the growing apprehensions of treason on the part of one of his followers sensibly modify the later doctrine of Jesus; and there is plainly perceptible a consequent development of the sadder aspect of the Kingdom which is totally inconsistent with the

supposition that these anticipations of death were subsequent interpolations. They are integral parts of his life and doctrine, and only improbable to those who have not realised the circumstances in which he lived, and the Teacher's method of interpreting circumstances.

The predictions that he should come again to judge the world next claim our consideration. But here the danger for an investigator is, not so much that he should hastily deny that Jesus uttered these predictions, but rather that he should hastily assert that the utterance of them stamps the utterer as a mere fanatic. The belief that he should judge the world follows on the belief that he was the Messiah. "If Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah, the Son of man spoken of by the prophet Daniel, then"—such an objector may say—"it was a matter of course that he should also believe that he would come to judge the world seated on the clouds. The pity is, that he believed either."

As dispassionate investigators of facts, we disclaim, for the present, any right to condemn what we may deem erroneous inferences from facts. We are at present trying to find out what Jesus did and taught, not, as yet, what people ought to think about him. Yet we may here put in a caution for ourselves and others that, in interpreting the doctrine of Jesus, we must not first graft our base notions upon his words, and then condemn his words for our own baseness. Before, therefore, we express any

opinion about the predictions of the judgment of the Son of man, we ought carefully to consider what Jesus meant by *judging*.

Having regard to his ordinary use of terms, and to his constant use of analogy in deducing the practice of God from that of men, we shall feel safe in asserting that by *judgment* Jesus meant the highest and best kind of judgment that the human mind can conceive; that is to say, a perfectly truthful, conspicuous, self-executing verdict passed by the Judge, and simultaneously acknowledged to be true by the accused. This judgment is not a mere utterance of superior force, nor does it require the pomp of power. It is the invisible influence of righteousness when revealed to the guilty, parting the souls of men asunder, and dividing the good from the evil in each man's nature. It is the convicting influence that comes to men lying contentedly in a dark prison, when light is suddenly forced upon them, revealing the squalor of their prison. If any should be disposed to consider this too spiritual a notion for Jesus of Nazareth, let him remember that even the author of the Apocalypse—surely not a more spiritual teacher than his Master—describes the *sharp two-edged sword* of judgment not as being in the hand of the Son of man, but as proceeding *out of his mouth*. It was by his word, by his doctrine, by his spiritual power, and not by sensible fires and tangible worms that Jesus of Nazareth proposed to judge and purify the world.

It follows that—like the other metaphorical circumstances associated with the *Day of Judgment*, such as the darkening of the sun and the roaring of the sea, which every reader of the Prophets knows to have denoted spiritual or political, and not mere material convulsions, so also the seat on the *clouds of heaven* must be interpreted of a heaven-sent and conspicuous but spiritual judgment.

Thus interpreted, therefore, what is the sum of the predictions of Jesus concerning his death and future coming? It amounts to this, that although he was destined shortly to be slain, yet his work should not be frustrated, but be continued through retribution and conflict, terminating in success. Jerusalem, the city of hypocrisy, must be cast down. Retribution, swift and terrible, must fall upon the chosen people. The whole world must also be convulsed before the final Judgment should come. But at last, at a day and hour not known to the Teacher himself, his Word should judge the world. The standard of his righteousness conspicuously set up before all races of mankind, should convict them of unrighteousness, and fill them with purifying repentance. Then, and not till then, the end should come. Meantime, let his disciples be of good cheer. His body and his blood should still be their food; his breath or spirit should be the breath of their souls, giving them an eloquence and wisdom which none of their adversaries should be able to gainsay. What though he should be slain in Jerusalem? Let

them go back from the Passover to their Galilean homes in peace and confidence, and they should find his presence awaiting them there.

Passing now to the history of the followers of Jesus after his death, and adopting the same system as before, we begin with the certain and undisputed, and pass thence to the probable. It is then absolutely certain, that a few years after the death of Jesus, his followers believed, and succeeded in making others believe, that he had risen from the dead. It is also absolutely certain that one Paul, an enemy of Jesus, a strict adherent of the Law, was arrested in the midst of a course of persecution of the Christians by a vision of Jesus, which, from an enemy, made him a fervent disciple. Accepting this as a historical fact, and seeking a natural explanation of it, we infer that the mind of Paul was prepared by previous doubts and questionings to receive this vision. He must have had, we say, inducements, suggestions of the conscience, which at first he successfully fought against; by degrees they became stronger; and at last, suddenly beating down all resistance, they produced a revolution in his excited mind, which, as a natural result created the vision. This natural explanation we find to be confirmed by Paul's own account. The vision itself reproaching him with *kicking against the pricks* of conscience, reminded him that he had found resistance a *hard* task. But although this explanation makes the vision and conversion natural, it increases instead of diminishing

our wonder at the influence of Jesus after his death. Paul had never seen Jesus. Such influence as he had received from the Teacher of the Galileans, he must have received indirectly, through Stephen perhaps, and others of the persecuted Christians. How stupendous then must have been the personal influence of a Leader who, even after death, through the diffused force which he exerted upon the hearts of his followers, could so powerfully move the heart of an enemy and a persecutor as to force him not only to become a friend, but even to see a vision of himself in heaven !

But if so marvellous an effect could be produced upon an enemy, how much more naturally upon a friend ! Turning therefore to the books of the Christians we expect to find records of similar appearances to the disciples of Jesus. Accordingly, in a letter written by Paul himself, we read that many such visions had been seen by the Apostles and earlier followers. In each case Paul uses the same word to describe the vision. Jesus, he says, *appeared* to James, to Peter, to five hundred disciples, and *last of all to me also*. Such an *appearing* does not of course exclude the supposition that Jesus had a real and what St. Paul calls a *spiritual body* ; but obviously the language of the apostle neither necessitates nor implies (if anything, rather denies) that the body of Jesus was material.

Turning to the Original Tradition we find no mention of any appearance of Jesus after death.

But this is not surprising. The appearances were numerous and seen in circumstances of ecstasy which would prevent even simultaneous witnesses from recording, or perhaps even observing, the same facts : consequently they were at first not set down in the Common Tradition. The Resurrection being taken for granted as the keystone of the apostolic doctrine, the details of it were omitted. But even the earliest Gospel contains a promise that Jesus should appear to the disciples. A vision proclaims to some women, *He goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him.* The Gospel next in order contains an account of an appearance of Jesus on a mountain to the eleven disciples, where they *saw him and worshipped him : but some doubted.* The third and fourth Gospels, written at later periods, addressing themselves obviously to the task of showing that the appearances of Jesus were not phantasmal, add new details which, from our present point of view, cannot be accepted as historical. But all alike concur in this, that Jesus appeared to no one (with the exception of St. Paul, whose vision is considered alone) whose mind was not already prepared to see him by deep affection and desire. From our point of view, therefore, the only obstacle to our receiving as historical such appearances of Jesus as are described in St. Paul's Epistle, is this, that whereas a vision is for the most part seen only by one, these visions were seen by more than one simultaneously. But to this only remaining

objection it may be replied, that the same unique and unparalleled force which enabled Jesus, in the course of nature, to convert an enemy after death may also, in the course of nature, have so thrilled the hearts of his disciples, with the same creative desire and the same self-justifying trust, as to reproduce, first before one, and then before others who may have at first *doubted*—as the Gospel tells us they did—the same image of the risen and triumphant Saviour. Thus step by step we are led, as the result of a dispassionate investigation, to see that we must accept as historical some kind of appearance, we will not say supernatural, but so marvellous that it well deserves some distinctive epithet, such as preternatural, whereby Jesus after death converted an enemy to a friend and impelled the Christian Church on its career of conquest.

The facts of the life of this great Teacher having been thus briefly considered, we return once more to the question, *What manner of man is this?* To such an appeal the countrymen of Shakespeare and of Bacon will never be so dreamily ignorant of human nature or so pusillanimously abhorrent of facts as to reply, *He was a myth*. Nor shall be able fairly to reply, *He was indeed a great Teacher, but his work is now done, and we need some new revelation*. On the contrary, the principle that he revealed and vivified for us, the law of brotherhood among men, is still the only principle whereby there is any hope of ultimately perfecting the human race. Besides, it

can be shown that, in every case where his religion has failed, the failure may be explained by some deviation from the rules prescribed by his spirit. Again, the errors and corruptions of Christianity are for the most part removable by time and experience; so that this religion has hopes of a constant and purifying development. For example, Christ taught mankind to forgive, but we (in some churches) have narrowed forgiveness into a sacerdotal rite; Christ taught men to imitate childhood, but we (in some churches) have placed the preaching of Christ's Gospel in the hands of celibates ignorant of the love of children; Christ taught us to despise miracles and signs and wonders, but we have made them all-important; Christ emancipated us from Law, but we have despised Liberty and placed upon our neck a new Law fashioned from the letter of the New Testament; Christ taught us that heaven and hell are the just and inevitable retributions of the things done here in the flesh, but we have made for ourselves a vindictive hell and an indulgent heaven, both of which are incompatible with the conception of a just God; Christ bade us fix our faith upon Himself, but we have fixed it on the Church, or on a Book; lastly, Christ set his face against outward distinctions of rank and unnecessary artificial inequalities, but we have sanctioned them and obtruded them, formerly in our political institutions, and even now in all our social arrangements, in our meetings, in our schools, and in our very

churches. Each one of these past and present derelictions of Christians suggests a hope for the future of the Church. If with a corrupt and distorted form of Christianity the world has achieved a considerable progress, what may not be expected when we return to the pure teaching of the Spirit of Christ himself?

What manner of man, then, is this? Surely even those who do not believe in a God must acknowledge in the Leader of this great social Revolution—of which we at present are only seeing the beginnings—the man who surpasses all others as a moral force in the world, the man who best exemplifies self-sacrifice, unselfish love, and who exhibits humanity in its highest and most admirable form. And of all the conquerors, statesmen, philanthropists, and prophets who have arisen to reform the world, surely this man is the one whom they must love and revere most, and in whose intuition into the needs of mankind they can place the greatest confidence.

But the great majority of the human race who believe in a God—what must be their attitude towards this, the highest of mankind? If they believe that God has been training men through history, and that Israel was indeed a nation chosen by God to lead mankind to Himself, what must they think of this, the greatest Prophet produced by Israel? If they believe that love is the governing principle of the world, what must they think of him who first established this principle upon a

firm basis, and who was himself the incarnate representation of its beauty and its strength ?

Were we indeed rediscovering an extinct religion, disinterring the life of the Founder of it from some mouldering parchments in some eastern monastery, our natural reverence and affection for a Being so pure and so unselfish would be chilled by the sad reflection that his life had been lived in vain, and that Nature had decided against his teaching. But Nature calls aloud that the religion of Christ is according to her Laws. Not by the vulgar test of superficial success, but by its accordance with the deepest Laws and satisfaction of the deepest needs of human nature, the work of Christ approves itself as being in conformity with the work of the Eternal Word since the creation of the world. Do men need to forgive and to be forgiven ? He has proved that he can enable his faithful followers to do both. Do they need to be freed from the fear of death ? He has freed all that trust in him. Do they need some link, at once human and divine, between the imperfect children of men and the perfect Father in heaven ? He has given them, according to his promise, his presence in their hearts, triumphant over death ; not the mere visible presence vouchsafed to James and Peter, and Paul, and the "five hundred brethren," but a spiritual presence potent for all good, which has inspired countless multitudes of his worshippers.

Those who even approximately appreciate the character of Christ must needs, one would think,

recoil from the thought that his life could have been a delusion, not so much out of the fear of lowering their estimate of Jesus, as from a terror at the tremendous consequences upon their belief in God Himself. For if you believe that a good God governs the world, how can you possibly do otherwise than reject as blasphemous the thought that He permitted such a one as Jesus of Nazareth to delude himself with inflated self-conceits, to ape the divinest attributes of the Supreme, the powers of forgiving and judging, and to live and die in the vain imagination that he was the Redeemer of mankind? Surely, if that were possible, the deceived would be morally superior to the deceiver; and Jesus of Nazareth would be more worthy of worship than God.

More worthy of worship than God! Yes, believe me, there are many things—so debased is the conception that many of us have formed of the Supreme—which are more worthy of worship than the false gods that we shape to ourselves from our imaginations; and Jesus of Nazareth, considered even merely as a man, is far more worthy of worship than the impure but too common image of a god who could do whatsoever he pleases, and who can make wrong right by his will. There is, as yet, a scarcity of righteous worship in the world. Many of those who worship God with their lips, and in their theories of life, are practically atheists or idolaters: for they do not love or trust or reverence any being worthy of the name of God. There is

often no hyperbole in the common saying, that men and women worship wealth, or fame, or pleasure, or their children, or the like. These earthly things are often our gods in practice; and when this is the case, are we not indeed atheists in comparison with the unselfish and laborious philanthropist who doubts the existence of a God, yet worships goodness in his actions? Surely the first step towards a purer religion is to recognise that worship cannot be paid to order; that it is the highest faculty of which human nature is capable; and that where love is absent, worship is impossible.

Therefore in answer to the question, *What manner of man is Jesus of Nazareth?* do not, I beseech you, content yourselves with answering, *He is God*, unless you feel that He stands highest in your love, your trust, and your reverence. For the conventional answer, satisfying you that you are in the right path, may possibly make you too easily contented with yourself and too ready to believe that you are worshipping Jesus of Nazareth, when in reality you are paying Him no genuine worship. It is far better, if it must be so, that while loving and reverencing Jesus more than any other human being, you should yet at times feel some little distrust of His complete intuition into the necessities of humanity, than that you should be absolutely certain of His omniscience and omnipotence, and yet offer Him a worship destitute of any tinge of love. Be content rather to acknowledge your

deficiencies and to aim at a truer knowledge of him ; and be sure that if you will but strive to live in his spirit, He will lead you to the highest worship of himself of which you are capable.

On the other hand, do not despise the worship of Jesus of Nazareth as a person, in the belief that you have found a higher substitute for it in the worship of Him as a diffused spirit of love knitting together regenerate mankind. As long as human fatherhood exists, so long will there abide on earth the world-wide testimony to the truths of Christ's religion ; but as long as human parents are weak and human children disobedient, so long will it be helpful for the disciples of Christ to renew their faith in the divine fatherhood by looking up toward heaven, there to behold One seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, manifested to be the perfect Son of God in heaven because He was the perfect Son of man on earth. God grant that to each of you this revelation may be given, that in answer to the question, *What manner of man is this ?* the experience of your lives and the result of your studies may combine in making this reply : "He is one whom I am forced to associate with the conception of the Father in heaven ; He is the incarnate expression of that governing principle of the world which the Jews called the Word of God. Other teachers of divine truths may be called Prophets, but He seems greater than a Prophet. He is the truest image of God vouchsafed to men ; and if even of imperfect leaders

and deliverers it may be said that, so far as they partake of the divine image, they may be called the children of the heavenly Father, then in a far higher sense, of this unique Leader and Deliverer, in answer to the question *What manner of man is this?* it must be said, *God who in sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, by whom also He made the worlds.*

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